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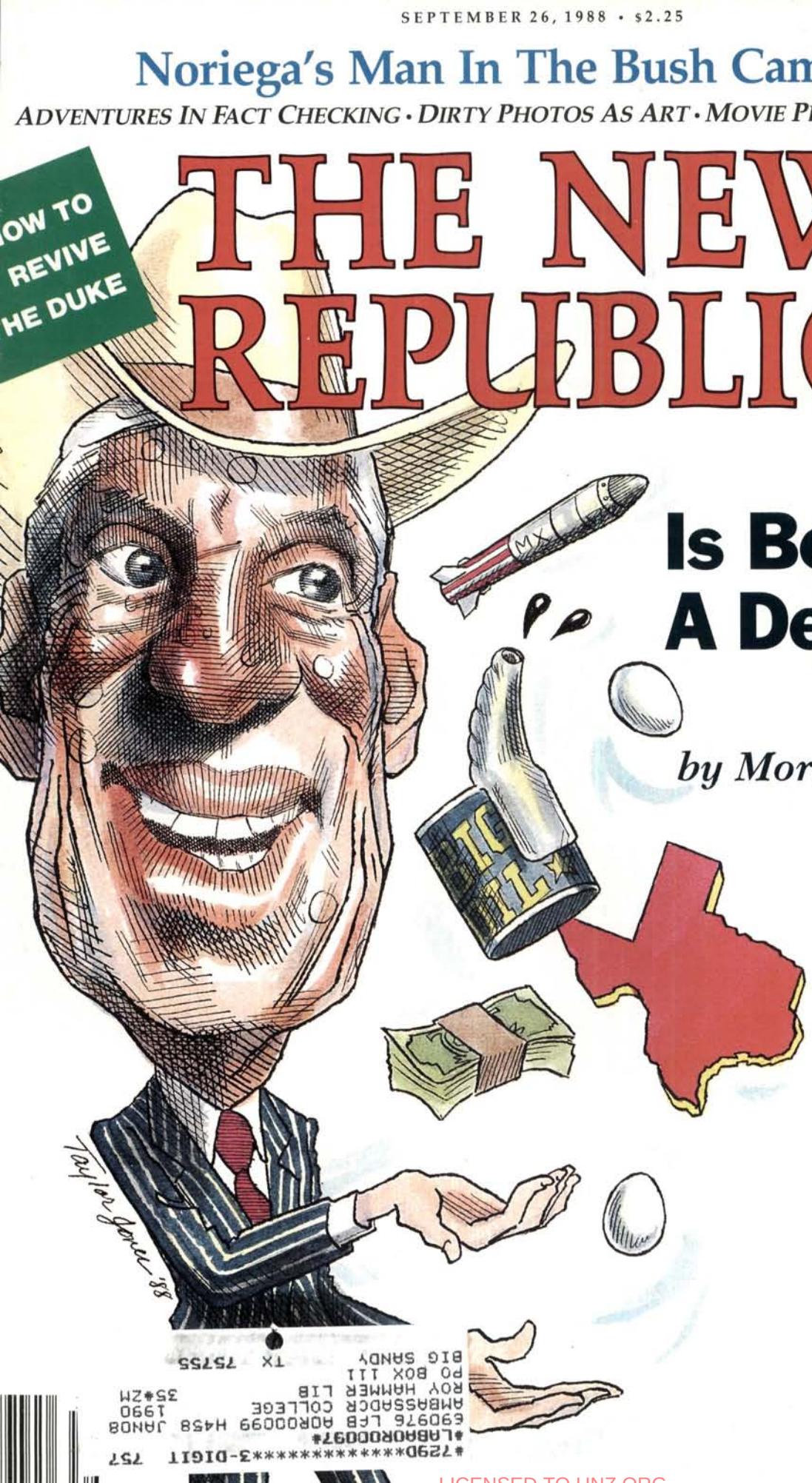


## Is Bentsen A Democrat?

*by Morton Kondracke*

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FROM WASHINGTON

## TRICKY GEORGE

Jane Fonda? George Bush on Michael Dukakis, September 4, in California: "I will not be surprised if he thinks a naval exercise is something you find in the Jane Fonda Workout Book." George Bush's handlers did not choose the punch line casually. Their purpose was to draw a patently fraudulent association between Dukakis and someone far to his left. Twenty years ago Jane Fonda visited North Vietnam. It would be like Dukakis, say, associating Bush with someone who 25 years ago opposed the Civil Rights Act—except that Bush himself opposed the Civil Rights Act. Wanna make something of it?

I don't. At least, not yet. But Dukakis has to decide how to respond to what the Bush forces seem determined to make the dirtiest campaign since 1952, when Richard Nixon accused Adlai Stevenson and Harry Truman (the latter now transformed into a Republican favorite) of being "traitors to the high principles in which many of the nation's Democrats believe." Even in 1952, the dirt was slung by the vice presidential candidate, while General Eisenhower struck an above-the-fray posture. And even Nixon said of the Democratic standard-bearer, "There is no question in my mind as to the loyalty of Mr. Stevenson," which is more grace than Bush has shown Governor Dukakis.

Dukakis has three options. He can try ignoring the dirt, he can start slinging it himself, or he can try to make an issue of it. So far he's made stabs at the first two. Why not try No. 3? I recommend this not out of moral scruple, goodness knows, but out of a belief—well, call it a hope—that there are votes to be gotten by appealing to people's sense of decency and fair play, their resentment at being patronized, and their suspicion that there must be more important things to talk about.

The danger of joining in the mudslinging is that Dukakis has no talent for it. Despite the farcical description of Dukakis by Bush media adviser Roger Ailes as "the dirtiest campaigner in America," he is almost pathologically clean. He needlessly fired his campaign manager, John Sasso (now embarrassingly rehired), for spreading *true* information about plagiarism by primary rival Joe Biden. Good grief. Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater, pulls five dirtier stunts than that before breakfast every day.

The danger in trying to turn the mudslinging into an issue against Bush is that Dukakis might come off as whining, self-pitying, and unleaderlike. But it needn't seem that way. Dukakis's only response to Bush's truly slimy exploitation of the Pledge of Allegiance has been a hopelessly lawyerlike thrust about the executive and the Constitution. The experts are saying he was foolish even to let himself be drawn into the cesspool that far. But what if he'd called a press conference and thrown down a gauntlet: "Look, Mr. Bush, are you questioning my patriotism? Because if you are, you ought to have the guts to say so directly, instead of insinuating it, and you ought to have the guts to say it to my face instead of ducking the debates you seem to be afraid of." I'm no expert on macho swaggering, but it seems to me that might work.

For all the usual right-wing complaints about liberal media bias, Bush has been playing the press like a violin in this campaign. So far, at least, he's gotten away with his slimeball politics because of two conventions of political journalism.

The first is the convention of "balance." The press has not failed to note the vile nature of the campaign, but has strived ardently for symmetry in its reporting. Thus: Bush and his entourage are daily suggesting that Dukakis loves murderers and doesn't love his country; Dukakis remarked once about the Reagan administration, "A fish rots from the head down"; it's a dirty campaign. Back to you, Dan, Peter, Tom. In fact there is no symmetry at all between Dukakis's use of a colorful metaphor to say what he is not shy of saying directly—that a president is responsible for corruption in his administration—and Bush's calculated use of innuendo to suggest something too low to say straight. The Bushies' mock horror at Dukakis's remark (Bush: "tasteless, offensive"; Atwater: drives

*continued on page 41*


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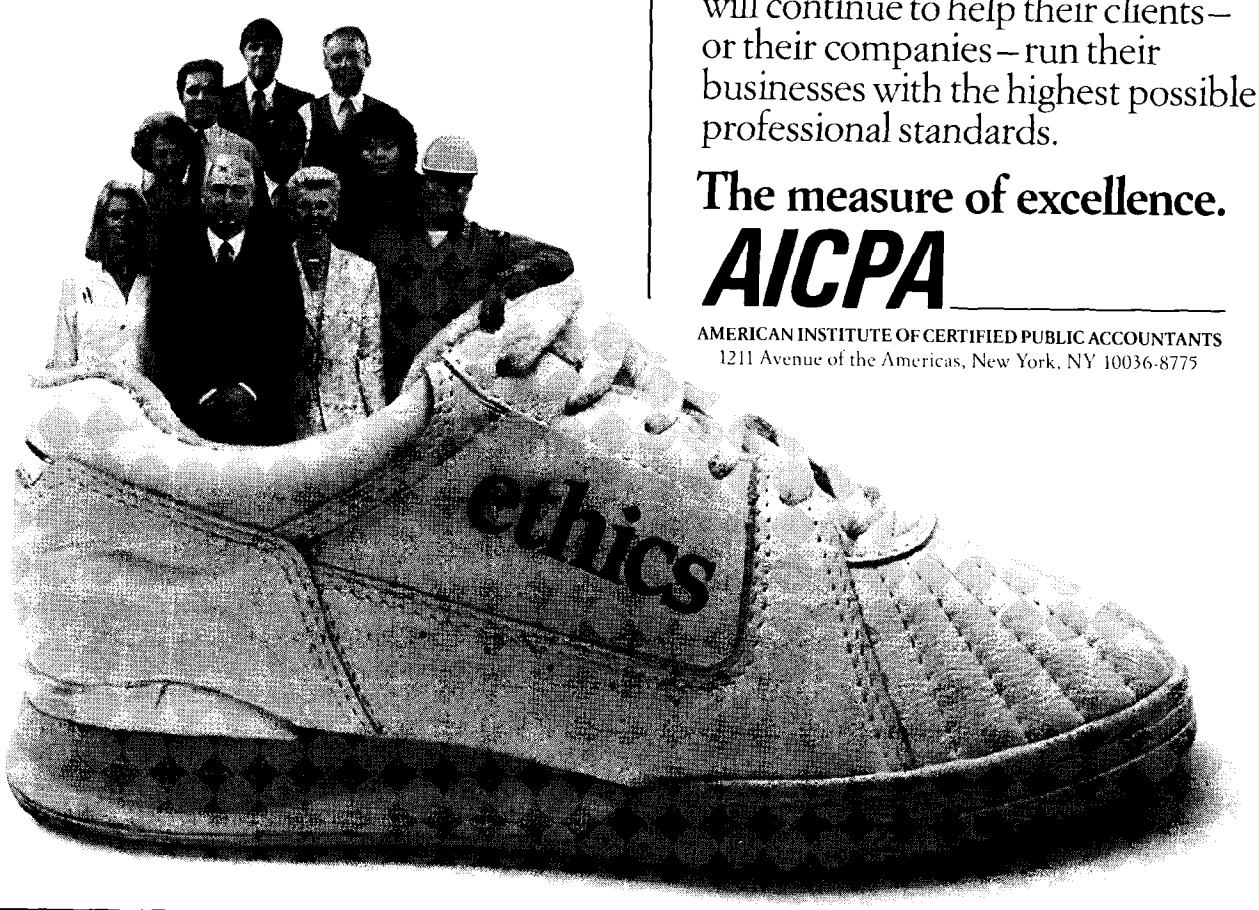


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# CORRESPONDENCE

## BOXERS' CORNER

*To the editors:*

Boxing is dangerous, but many other sports are equally hazardous, if not more so ("Ban Boxing," August 8 & 15). Yes, Ali is a sad sight. But his condition is the result of his personal demons as much as of the sport itself. When he first retired, he had plenty of money and was in good shape physically and mentally. Then he came back. And he came back again. He was older, slower, and got hit. A lot. If Sugar Ray Leonard goes back in, it may be the same story.

But brutality aside, it is your hand-wringing about role models for inner-city kids that most verges on the fatuous. "So few black role models are professors and lawyers." This from a publication that devotes the bulk of its space every week to the sleazy doings of various members of the bar! "Boxers get rich without an education," you tsk. At many colleges, a football player's grades magically become "C's" at midnight, and athletes with "four years of college" hit the streets unable to read a menu. At least boxers are not victimized by their sport's corruption of the educational system on their way to wealth. "Their victories involve no teamwork," you fret, as if the committee were the highest known form of human existence. Aside from ignoring the intense teamwork in each man's corner, this disvalues individualism to a degree surprising for TNR, and it is no more or less true of diving, fencing, or gymnastics.

Ban all professional athletics (inner-city kids do a lot of basketball bouncing in place of studying, and professionalism perverts even the suburbs with do-or-die little league): the dangers, the misplaced priorities, and the role-model defects apply to all.

DONALD L. MARTIN
*Richmond, Virginia*

*To the editors:*

TNR decries the spectacle of public boxing, forgetting that all sports have the same element in them, whether one plays "to move the ball closer into a net" or "to move the opponent closer to death." At sporting events the most excitement occurs when someone is violently thrust aside or upended. This happens to be a characteristic of human behavior. If boxing were eliminated because people were confused over the true object and appeal of the game then all sports with an element of danger should be eliminated, including auto racing and mountain climbing. To pit one or a team of individuals against either nature or another team to determine if one can survive and conquer possible injury or death—that is the exact essence that most adventurers are looking for. Whether one hides it under football rules or auto racing rules does not eliminate it from being there, and in truth it is only exposed in boxing.

LYLE D. KOEN, M.D.
*Austin, Texas*

## JOURNALISTIC USES OF AIDS

*To the editors:*

Even conservatives are entitled to set the record straight when confronted with the liberties Michael Fumento has taken with the *Wall Street Journal*'s position on AIDS and the likelihood of heterosexual transmission ("The Political Uses of an Epidemic," August 8 & 15). Let me supply the full paragraph of the editorial he cites, with the sentence he has chosen to quote in italics:

> The unknown danger of AIDS is with us now, but it pays to stress the word 'unknown.' *An African-style epidemic is certainly possible, especially with a mutation of the virus.* But this has not happened yet in the U.S., and it is not a sure thing. Unless the testing in the coming weeks and months show a major breakout of the virus into the larger community, it may be that the wrath of this disease will remain largely confined to vulnerable pockets.

Come on. In fact, our major effort in relation to AIDS has been trying to break through the FDA regulatory roadblocks to more widespread use of experimental drugs for AIDS and other incurable diseases. If this is a conservative agenda, it is also one with enormous support among AIDS victims.

ROBERT L. BARTLEY
*Editor, Wall Street Journal*
*New York, New York*

*To the editors:*

Michael Fumento's statement that my February 26 op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* "push[es] the theory that AIDS is really syphilis" is incorrect. My article pointed out that heterodox theories about the nature of AIDS, such as those proposed by Professor Peter Duesberg at the University of California, Berkeley, were not being given a fair hearing. Mr. Duesberg does not in fact believe that AIDS is really syphilis, as I noted in my article.

KATIE LEISHMAN
*Brooklyn, New York*

*Michael Fumento replies:*

I'll have to insist upon sidestepping Ms. Leishman's straw man. I didn't say Mr. Duesberg claimed AIDS is syphilis (though Ms. Leishman quotes him as saying it may often be an AIDS co-factor). I said Ms. Leishman pushed the theory. Wrote she, "[Duesberg] is often asked about the growing epidemiological link between syphilis and AIDS. . . . Many public health officials are speculating about the new outburst and its relationship to the emergence of AIDS in the syphilis-ridden gay community of nearly a decade ago." If it's not clear that Ms. Leishman is advocating that position and not simply reporting it, her massive January 1988 *Atlantic* article, entitled not incidentally "AIDS and Syphilis," should dispel any doubt.

The efforts of the *Wall Street Journal* to speed up the FDA drug approval process are laudable, but have nothing to do with whether the paper has sought to propagate the myth of a heterosexual epidemic while keeping out op-eds by those who assert otherwise. Mr. Bartley seems to think I've misquoted his newspaper by not throwing in his qualifiers of "not happened yet" (fairly obvious) and "it may be" that the disease will be confined. This smacks of Masters and Johnson saying that you can get AIDS from a toilet seat or a food handler but adding that it is very difficult. If someone raises the specter of an "African-style epidemic" that would kill perhaps tens of millions of Americans, one owes readers a little more than saying it "has not happened yet." Further, when one raises the possibility of the AIDS virus mutating to become more easily transmissible, one should also note that it would be the first virus ever known to do so. When so influential an op-ed page as the *Journal*'s freezes out one point of view, it has all the more obligation to print fair editorials. □



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THE NEW REPUBLIC
SEPTEMBER 26, 1988

# TAXING FACTS

Like many observers, we have revised our estimation of George Bush in light of his late-summer surge in the polls. We previously considered him a garden variety blue blood: aimlessly enthusiastic and nauseatingly chipper, well-educated but ultimately vapid—all told, not a force for Michael Dukakis to reckon with. But then Bush unveiled his secret weapon: an unerring sense for the base and simple parts of the American mind. Through a series of lies, half-truths, and innuendoes, he has managed to depict Dukakis as a wild-eyed radical with no great love for the American flag but a special place in his heart for convicted murderers. At the same time, Bush has engineered an equally profound distortion of his own image. For example, after spending eight years in an administration that vetoed the Clean Water Act and emasculated the Environmental Protection Agency, he has cast himself as an environmentalist. How? Simple: He just stands in front of breaking surf and points to a lifelong record of vacation fishing.

Perhaps the most potent myth in Bush's arsenal, and thus the most urgently in need of debunking, is that he and Ronald Reagan are champions of the American taxpayer. We're not talking about Bush's dubious claim that as president he would go the next four years without raising the average American's taxes. We're talking about his claim that this administration has gone the last eight years without doing so—that, indeed, Ronald Reagan was the bearer of "across-the-board tax cuts." The truth is exactly the opposite. This administration has performed the difficult feat of simultaneously building a towering budget deficit and *increasing* the average citizen's tax burden.

The Kemp-Roth supply-side tax "cut" of 1981 did look, on paper, as if it would lower tax rates broadly. But inflation—which everyone, including Kemp, Roth, and Reagan, knew would continue (and indeed *has* continued at rates that seem tame only in comparison with the late 1970s)—pushed people into higher tax brackets and devalued the fixed deductions most important to middle- and lower-income taxpayers. The result, given the contours of Kemp-Roth, was a tax burden that fell more heavily than before on lower- and middle-income families. A 1985 Brookings Institution study found that the portion of family income going to federal individual income tax shrank between 1980 and 1985 only for the most affluent fifth of the nation. For middle-income taxpayers, the burden grew by more than one-tenth, and for lower-income taxpayers by even more. All told, Kemp-Roth's supposed reductions in personal income taxes ended up merely shifting the burden of tax revenues, not substantially cutting them. What caused the tax revenue drop of the early 1980s was a companion cut in corporate income taxes—which, needless to say, did little for the average taxpayer.

But the income tax is only the beginning of the story. Although George Bush doesn't dwell on it, in 1983 his mentor President Reagan signed the largest tax increase in the history of the universe: the Social Security trust fund bailout, which involved a large and continuing increase in the FICA payroll tax. FICA is a tax that applies only to working income of middle-class level and under. Unlike the income tax, which exempts low-income wages, FICA applies to wages from dollar one but exempts salaries over $43,000; it also exempts all investment income (interest, capital gains, etc.).

The Social Security trust fund is now running huge surpluses of about $50 billion a year, which are being used to reduce the Reagan budget deficits. "We're going to keep that Social Security trust fund sound and out of reach of the big spenders," Bush said in his convention acceptance speech. But in fact, the money is already in the hands of the big spenders. Despite the fiction of a separate trust fund, and the accounting fiction that this fund is loaning money to the federal Treasury, the figure you see advertised as the federal deficit is the amount the government must borrow from outsiders *after* using Social Security's $50 billion surplus. The conceit that the 1983 tax rise guaranteed the trust fund's solvency into the next century depends on whether, a generation from now, the Treasury will be able and willing to pay the accumulated trillions of dollars back, with interest. That, of course, won't be Ronald Reagan's problem—or George Bush's. In the meantime, the Reagan administration has used this regressive tax on workers to fund the government and make up for part of its other tax cuts.



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Yes, Reaganites will reply, but what about the 1986 tax reform? Although it sharply lowered upper-income tax rates, it also closed many loopholes and removed millions of working poor from the tax rolls, causing a slight net shift of the tax burden toward the upper classes. This journal enthusiastically supported that reform. But bear in mind that the original impetus behind tax reform was Democratic. (Remember back when it was called Bradley-Gephardt?) The Reagan administration, in skillfully commandeering the issue without any pangs of ideological infidelity, presaged the shameless repositioning that has gotten George Bush where he is in the polls today.

In any case, by 1986 Reagan had done so much damage to average taxpayers that even with this relief they were left worse off than before the advent of supply-side economics. A Congressional Budget Office report published late last year detailed the overall damage, showing that for most households, including most middle-income households, the effective federal tax rate—including FICA, corporate, and excise taxes—grew over the past ten years. The exact fraction of households paying a larger fraction of their income in federal taxes now than a decade ago ranges somewhere between 50 and 80 percent, depending on how a key accounting technicality is handled. The minority of households that enjoyed a tax cut were mostly at the upper end of the income spectrum. The most affluent one percent, for example, saw their effective tax rate drop by around eight points, bringing it well under 30 percent. (The CBO's numbers, beginning in 1977, include the effect of a 1978 tax bill that cut capital gains taxes. This bill, though signed reluctantly by Jimmy Carter, was passed by roughly the same coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats that passed Kemp-Roth, and in effect it marks the beginning of supply-side tax policy.)

Don't be misled by a frequent Republican ploy on the question of the tax burden (already used on the campaign

# THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

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**1. PUT UP YOUR DUKE**

*The race.* Does Dukakis have a second act? What was his first act? It was the same passivity that backfired last week. Dukakis in the primaries was the candidate of resort. He seemed smart, talked competence, but mostly he was cautious; he coolly let the other guys self-destruct. Bush's success has been to turn that passivity against Dukakis.

**2. BEACHED WAILS**

*Environment.* The environment issue is serious, sort of. Bush (!) is trying to co-opt it, ABC has given it a whole week (imagine), and most important, it has survived the beach season. Still, the issue awaits a knowledgeable noisemaker capable of giving it focus. Otherwise it stays a collection of mere phrases and slogans that fade when people tire of them.

**3. MESSAGE TO MIKHAIL**

*Glasnost.* Poland, the Brezhnev son-in-law trial, even the Soyuz emergency are all playing the same way. No, not as aspects of East vs. West competitiveness. Whether these stories involve the politics of control, the politics of revision, or the politics of information, they are all playing as Gorbo vs. Communism. We have, for the moment, written ourselves out of the story.

**4. GIVE AND FAKE**

*Presidential debates.* It's, heh-heh, "debate" debate time again. Of course, nobody considers these things debates; we call them debates to disguise the process's deterioration. They are in fact just like multi-lap auto races. The participants run around in circles, and the only thing that stands out later are the fiery crashes.

**5. HEARTS OF DARKNESS**

*Burundi and Bangladesh.* Third Worlders are doing the only thing they can to get our attention: suffering in huge numbers. In fact, the early angle from Dhaka was less the suffering than the hugeness of the numbers. Now, can Bangladesh repeat its 1974 role as an object of news pity? These places usually get just one shot. Ask Ethiopia. The Dhaka footage will be striking, though.

**6. WAITING FOR A RUSH**

*Drug war.* You think there's popular outrage over drug use? Then check out the Dexter Manley and Lawrence Taylor cases. Both defensive linemen were suspended for "substance" abuse. Yet the Manley story was how gamely he continued his lonely practices, and the Taylor story was how the team would manage until his return. Winning is everything, drugs nothing.

**7. ALL SHE ROTE**

*Pledge of Allegiance.* We elitists may have contempt for the ridiculous Pledge "issue," but it worked for Bush like crazy. Mostly overlooked in the exchange: that rote repetition, day after day, will quickly empty anything of its content, from the intended patriotism of the pledge to the intended inspiration of prayers. Even patriots are just mumbling along.

**8. ALMS RACE**

*Begging.* This media bubble was about begging etiquette and middle-class guilt. It might have been better to ask why American cities feel increasingly Dickensian. Or maybe you were satisfied with the prominent angle on phony beggars getting cynically rich. Something's going on in the streets, though news consumers seem more interested in their personal reactions.

**9. FLIGHT LESSONS**

*Camcorders.* There's a lesson to be gotten from the German air show disaster, quite apart from what maneuvers to allow. The footage that gave the story TV prominence, like the footage from a recent cruise ship terrorist attack, came from an amateur with a camcorder. The rise of camcorders is becoming an important factor in the splatterizing of visual news.

**10. DISTILLED WISDOM**

*Sobriety.* A move to insert anti-drinking messages in TV shows has raised the issue of social control (ZC, August 1). Do we want behavior affected by structured Hollywood notions of benevolence? Medieval morality plays seem quaint to us, but we are inviting their modern equivalent. The question is, in whom are we investing the equivalent moral authority?

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.



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trail by Dan Quayle). They like to point out that the share of taxes paid by the rich has increased in recent years, while the share of taxes paid by the poor has gone down. It's true. The CBO report says that the poorer half's contribution to the income tax dollar has dropped by eight percent since 1977. What Republicans fail to note is that the poorer half's share of the *income* dollar dropped by nine percent (down to 18.2 cents). Similarly, the most affluent five percent of the nation has seen its tax contribution rise by 11 percent, but Republicans don't mention that this group's share of the income dollar has risen by 20 percent (up to 24.2 cents).

Indeed, were income distribution *not* becoming so uneven, the growth in the average citizen's tax burden would be still more striking than it is. According to the CBO report, if between 1977 and 1988 the distribution of income had held constant at, say, 1984 levels, then *nine* of ten households would have seen their effective tax rates grow. In other words, the Reagan-Bush tax record has brought good news and bad news. The bad news is that lower- and middle-income taxpayers had to swallow *higher* effective tax rates. The good news is that—because the Reagan administration has let the poor get poorer while the rich get richer—these tax rates didn't grow by as much as they might have.

## Curse Of The Kurds

The Israelis have been the object of more international opprobrium for their use of tear gas than the Iraqis have for their use of mustard gas. This wild asymmetry cannot be put down to the low expectations international opinion has for those who rule in Baghdad. In fact, Iraq has long played the role of exemplary Middle East moderate in the Western diplomatic imagination. In the seven decades since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Iraqi state, the only period when the putative heirs of Mesopotamia were out of Western favor were the two decades between the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in 1958 and the ascendancy of Khomeini's Shiite revolution in neighboring Iran. Otherwise Iraq was the beneficiary of sentimentality and largess, virtually unaffected by its wartime dalliance with the Nazis. Keep in mind that modern Iraq is an utter contrivance of the West, Britain in particular. The virtues delusionaries like T. E. Lawrence had imputed to the kingdom the Colonial Office had sponsored—loyalty, measure, sagacity—were reassigned in 1978, in a quick ideological elision, to the governing Ba'ath regime, the one self-proclaimed socialist regime in the world to be so indulged.

Iraqi politics, which means the deployment of army force, has been almost unexceptionally barbaric—especially at home. This was easy since nobody in the Western policy or media elites cares a fig for the Shiites, who are the majority of Iraq's populace, or for the Kurds, who constitute at least another quarter. The Jews, who lived in what is now Iraq for 26 centuries, had understood what intolerant nationalism under Sunni patronage would mean and ran for their lives. Nationalism let loose over a mixed ethnic population is almost always a cruel enterprise. It has been particularly so in Iraq because its distinctive local nationalism, supported only by a minority of the population, aspired to be the vanguard of a more generalized and even more alien pan-Arab nationalism.

Today, as at times in the past, the Kurds are the designated victims of Iraqi nationalist cruelties. Though the Kurds are Sunni Muslims themselves, their crime is to be ethnically different and to want an autonomous political framework for their differences. The three million Kurds in Iraq are part of a historically conscious people dispersed also in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and the Soviet Union. These are all countries habitually phobic to those who seek, however modestly, a separate destiny. The Kurds' historical and moral case certainly is older and stronger than that of the Palestinians. But they have not been fortunate enough to have the Jews as their enemies. If Israelis were hurling tear gas at the Kurds—not mustard gas, mind you—the victims would enjoy vast international sympathy and support. The Vatican would be solicitous for their future; the liberal Protestant churches would fund their propaganda; the Quakers would certify their violence as peaceful; the Communists would anoint them as comrades; the other European states would counsel them in diplomacy; Jews would smother them with Jewish guilt; intellectuals would be improvising for them a noble history.

The Kurds of northern Iraq now are being murdered by the army of the state in which they live. With the same poison gas it used so effectively against Iranian civilians and against its own "citizens" (hardly the right word in a place like Iraq) who had the misfortune to live in villages overrun by the Iranian army. Do not be shocked if the Iraqi offensive against the Kurds turns genocidal. This is not a culture that inordinately values human life, certainly not the lives of people defined as "other." Iraq, this so-called moderate state, has reintroduced mustard gas into modern warfare, in violation of signed covenants. This is, to be sure, not the only agreement Saddam Hussein has ripped up: he also repudiated Iraq's treaty with Iran over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway and started the ten-year war. His Palestinian allies in Fatah, also "moderates" in the degraded currency of Near East politics, might ponder what Arab moderation looks like and how reliable it seems in Jerusalem.

Last year was the 800th anniversary of the defeat of the Christian Crusader armies in the Holy Land. The victory was marked none too subtly throughout the Islamic orbit as an auguring of what would ultimately happen to the Jews, whom many Arabs see as only the most recent wave of transients. The hero and architect of the decisive victory at Hittin, near Tiberias, was the sultan Saladin. Saladin was a Kurd, a fact nowhere cited during the anniversary in the Arab world. It is a sign of just how little diversity Arab nationalism will tolerate in its ambit. Given the indifference of all the world's warmhearted humanitarians, it is another sign of doom for the Kurds. □



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# NOTEBOOK

□ THE JACKSON WATCH: Jesse Jackson's sulks are always front-page news. With that incentive, it should be no wonder if he decides to be despondent—or contingently despondent—straight through to Election Day. The causes of his dejection are petty, involving his ego more than the real interests of his constituency: for example, his complaint that Governor Dukakis didn't call him to "consult" before speaking at the 25th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. What Jackson means when he demands more "sensitivity" from the party nominee is more obsequiousness toward himself.

The issues on which Jackson has found Dukakis insufficiently exuberant—statehood for the District of Columbia, set-asides for minority business—are hardly the core of a sensible program to help the half of all black children, most of them children of unmarried mothers, who live in poverty, according to a recent Census Bureau report. Jackson's petulance is also meant to cover up how impoverished his own views are about this demographic disaster.

You'd think the media might tire of Jackson's game. Or, since they are still paying such close attention to his pronunciamentos, you'd think they might have noticed perhaps the vilest and most ignorant statement of his entire public career. No, it has nothing to do with Jews. It happened on August 17 during ABC's coverage of the Republican convention. David Brinkley and Peter Jennings had just interviewed Senator Dan Quayle, who had referred to the late President Zia of Pakistan as an ally of the United States. Jackson, interviewed next by Jennings, picked up dismissively on Quayle's observation. "He says so long as one is allied with America, that's basically all right." Jackson went on, "He [Quayle] must know Hitler was an American ally." This evil falsehood didn't seem to register at all with Jennings. There were none of his patented knowing looks. Nor have any of the media, who ordinarily hang on Jackson's every word, troubled to ask him to explain himself in this case.

□ PLEDGE OF EGREGIANCE: Are there any non-scoundrels left in the Grand Old Party? The latest Republican to seek Dr. Johnson's last refuge of the scoundrel is William Bennett. On NBC's *Meet the Press* on September 5, the secretary of education—defending George Bush's demagogic attacks on Michael Dukakis over the Pledge of Allegiance—declared sweepingly of all who live in "that Brookline-Cambridge world": "These are people who don't like the pledge [and] have disdain for the simple and basic patriotism of most Americans." Give Bennett credit, at least, for saying what Bush has only had the guts to insinuate: that the opposition is unpatriotic. But for a national official to be exploiting regional prejudice so grossly is dismaying. For the education secretary, no less, to be pandering to crude anti-intellectualism—suggesting that everyone associated with Harvard, or who even lives nearby, is un-American because "they think they're smarter than everybody else"—is shameful. And for William Bennett, who knows better even if George Bush doesn't, to be making an issue of the other side's love of flag and country is simply repulsive. Cambridge and Brookline are full of émigrés and refugees from other societies who don't need instruction from William Bennett in loving America. Even on the very Harvard faculty, there may be a few whose contributions to American civilization outweigh those of Secretary Bennett himself. If most of these people prefer Dukakis to Bush, it's because they believe—rightly or wrongly—that he's better for America, not because they care less about America than William Bennett does. It's horrible that such an obvious point should even have to be made.

□ EIGHT BILLION GOING ONCE, EIGHT BILLION GOING TWICE . . . :

**B-1 bomber improvements may cost up to $3.4 billion**

—*Orlando Sun*, August 23

***B-1 Overhaul Could Cost $7.8 Billion, Report Says***

—*New York Times*, same day

**B-1B repair costs put at $8-billion**

—*St. Petersburg Times*, same day

(thanks to Robert Stead, Kearny, New Jersey)

## CAMPAIGN '88

# S.O.S.

*Chicago*

Somebody please tell Michael Dukakis he's not the incumbent in the presidential race. Nobody treats Dukakis that way (except the man himself). The press covers his bland pronouncements only as a last resort. In Chicago on September 6 reporters dwelt on the mauling of anti-abortion protesters during a Dukakis speech and the Federal Aviation Administration's grounding of his chartered airplane—anything, in other words, but his uninteresting speech. Protesters don't treat him with any respect either. In St. Louis on Labor Day, they came in costume (a pig, a sheep, a cow, a gorilla, a chicken, a rabbit) and complained that years ago as a state legislator Dukakis had killed an anti-bestiality statute. "Wag your tail if you're for bestiality," a placard said.

Still, Dukakis doesn't get the message. He ought to reflect on the fact that he won the Democratic nomination in large part because he was, as Mike Barnicle of the *Boston Globe* puts it, "the last white guy standing." And he'd be wise to give up the assumption that victory is his so long as he makes no egregious mistakes between now and Novem-



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ber 8. A month ago that was a safe assumption. Now, with Bush's emergence as a surprisingly effective campaigner, it's not. Nor does the return of John Sasso as Dukakis's full-time campaign guru guarantee anything. True, it makes Dukakis feel a lot better. He told one supporter four times during the same conversation that "John's back."

EVERYONE IN THE Dukakis camp pays lip service to the candidate's need to "sharpen" his message, whatever that means. What worked in the primaries won't work now. With this admonition in mind, Dukakis shoved off on Labor Day with a toughened stump spiel. It didn't work. The new parts consisted mostly of weak but demagogic zingers aimed at Bush or short passages that screamed, "Hey, I'm a sound bite. Put me on the evening news." In the text of Dukakis's speech to Polish-Americans in Chicago, the sound-bite-in-waiting was underlined to draw attention: "Those Republicans in Washington love to blame American workers first." Sam Donaldson and Chris Wallace, it turned out, were more interested in the noisy anti-abortionists being dragged away as Dukakis spoke.

The Dukakis campaign needs more than sharpening. It requires a quick overhaul. Otherwise, Dukakis will lose control of his fate. He'll be dependent on Bush gaffes to win. That's not a good position to be in. To regain control, here's what Dukakis should do:

*Reinvent the wimp.* A single development changed the nature of the campaign. It was Bush's shedding of the wimp image as a result of his convention speech, his fortitude in sticking with Dan Quayle as his running mate, and his lack of squeamishness in attacking Dukakis on conservative social issues. Voters have short memories. Greg Schneiders, a Democratic political consultant, says Dukakis must remind voters why they used to dislike Bush.

If Dukakis manages this, he can win without doing much else. But he's got to understand the source of the wimp image. Ann Richards and other Democrats who attacked Bush at the Democratic convention didn't. Bush's problem is not his upper-class background. It's the idea that he's weak and indecisive, a guy who sheepishly goes along. The best issue to make this point is Iranamok. Bush, after all, went along with the arms sale to Iran, the single most unpopular foreign policy move of the 1980s. Contrast his complaisance with the objections voiced by Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz. If Dukakis has any sense, he'll hammer this issue home, particularly in TV commercials and debates.

There are other wimp issues. Harrison Hickman, a Democratic pollster, says he's been amazed at what turns up when small groups of voters are asked for examples of Bush's not standing for anything. They cite Bush's flip-flop from criticizing Reagan's "voodoo economics" to backing it. "People remember that term," says Hickman. A TV ad on this could show tapes of Bush "before" and "after" Reagan jerked his chain. Another ad could show his going along with Nixon's explanations about Watergate or changing his position on abortion, Marcos, etc.

*Get a real economic message.* Sorry, but trying to convince the American people there hasn't been prosperity in the 1980s for anyone except Donald Trump is a non-starter. It just isn't true. Dukakis is nuts to push voters to ask if they are better off now than eight years ago. Most will say yes, and vote for Bush. Instead, Dukakis has two ways to go on economics, and he can do both at the same time.

The first is raw economic nationalism of the sort that Richard Gephardt spouts. Dukakis doesn't have to endorse specific protectionist proposals. But he must make the issue of America's loss of control over its economy stick, and that means saying something memorable. Why not promise that in the first 72 hours of his presidency he'll call in the ambassadors from Japan, South Korea, and a bunch of European nations and read them the riot act about their trade practices? That's harmless enough, but it sounds tough.

The second approach seems obvious to me, but when I asked Chris Edley, Dukakis's issues czar, if the campaign had considered it, he instantly said no. It is a reduction in the Social Security payroll tax for the middle class and below. The Social Security trust fund is piling up a huge surplus. Why not give folks relief from the most regressive tax of all? Dukakis could contrast this with Bush's chief tax proposal, a drop in the capital gains rate from 28 percent to 15 percent. He could drape his entire economic argument around this proposal, which is a lot more riveting than the generalities that he relies on now.

*Find a good answer on the Pledge of Allegiance.* If Dukakis thinks this issue has faded, he's dreaming. The Bush crowd will exploit it until Dukakis makes them stop. His legalistic response that a 1943 Supreme Court ruling plus an advisory opinion from the Massachusetts high court made him veto a mandatory pledge in schools won't do. At the least, Dukakis must persuade voters he personally likes the pledge and didn't veto it out of disdain for displays of patriotism. He should say how wonderful he thinks the pledge is and how much he'd like to have signed the bill, if only it were constitutional.

If that would be unscrupulous, then he could try the high dudgeon routine. Bush got away with this when reporters nailed him for calling his Mexican-American grandchildren "the little brown ones." He expressed outrage that anyone would question his love for his grandchildren, and so on. Dukakis could voice deep resentment on behalf of himself, his family, his mother, his late father, and all ethnic Americans that his patriotism was being challenged, and dare Bush to accuse him of being unpatriotic to his face.

*Be likable.* Dukakis has a long way to go in making voters feel comfortable with him. For the life of me, I don't understand why he wears those forbidding dark suits with coat buttoned at campaign rallies. He looks like a banker who's stopped off on his way to the office. He wore this getup at the Labor Day celebration on Hart Plaza in Detroit. AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland had on the appropriate dress, a windbreaker. Bush appeared that day in California in shirt sleeves, with a small flag jammed in his pocket.

It's too late for a personality transplant, but there's no



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reason Dukakis can't adopt one or two of Reagan's tricks. Self-effacing humor is always appealing. It worked for Bush at the GOP convention. Anecdotes are better yet. Part of Reagan's magic comes from the stories he tells. Dukakis's only stories are about his parents, and that's not the same.

If all else fails, Dukakis could lose his temper with Jesse Jackson. For sure, Jackson will give him provocation. This would be a two-fer. He'd get credit for standing up to Jackson, the most unpopular politician in America with centrist and conservative white voters. And he'd show some emotion, real or faked. Remember how much Reagan gained when he blew his top—or pretended to—at "Mr. Green" in the Nashua debate. As a cool technocrat, Dukakis doesn't inspire or charm anyone.

*Inoculate himself on foreign policy.* Dukakis is due for a drubbing on foreign policy in the last weeks of the campaign unless he acts soon. He's got to build a backfire, or else be fried as a leftie isolationist of the McGovern school. I like Mark Shields's suggestion that he come up with some specific examples of where he'd use military force (without first asking permission from the United Nations or Organization of American States). He's said he'd use military force if the Soviets escalate their presence in Nicaragua. He should be specific about what he'd do with the 82nd Airborne, Rapid Deployment Force, Navy warships, and the Strategic Air Command. It would also be helpful for him to have a list of weapons systems he'd like to build as president. A short list will do.

*Come up with a "Big Reason."* This is the hardest part. Dukakis needs to give an overarching reason why he should be president. Bush has one. He's the guy who can keep going what Reagan started, or so he says. Reagan didn't need one. Not being Carter was enough. Carter had one in 1976. He'd restore honesty and order after Watergate. My reaction to a Dukakis speech is: OK, but why does he want to be president? The notion that he'll be a good manager isn't sufficient. Nor is the fact that he's brainy. I haven't got a suggestion here, but there must be something. Dukakis has until the first debate on September 25 to come up with that something.

**FRED BARNES**

My problem with George Bush.

# ROTH'S COMPLAINT

> What is it about the Pledge of Allegiance that upsets him so much? It is very hard for me to imagine that the Founding Fathers, Samuel Adams and John Hancock and John Adams, would have objected to teachers leading students in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States. —George Bush, August 24

Of course, Samuel Adams had been dead 89 years, John Hancock 99 years, and John Adams 66 years before the Pledge of Allegiance was even dreamed up. According to one account, the Pledge of Allegiance was a creation of the Kansas Populists and Republicans in 1892; according to another, it was devised in that year for publication in the magazine *Youth's Companion* to mark the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America. Its importance during the first decades of the 20th century was in the American educational system, where it was used largely to help de-Europeanize the children of immigrants and meld them into "one nation indivisible." Its subtext might run something like this: I do *not* pledge allegiance to the flag of Italy, or Ireland, or Germany, or the Ukraine, or Poland, etc. Far from being "upset" about the Pledge of Allegiance, the bright son of self-made Greek immigrants would probably, as a schoolchild, have been idealistically susceptible to its lofty formulations, even more so perhaps than the young scion of an old Yankee family for whom identification with this country would have been effortless and without ambiguity.

WHAT UPSETS Dukakis about the Pledge of Allegiance is too childish a question even to think about. But what Bush raises by asking it are more distressing questions about himself. Why is he going around the country leading audiences in the Pledge of Allegiance as though he were the leader of an American priesthood empowered to renaturalize citizens who happen already to be American? Why is he turning the Pledge of Allegiance into a loyalty oath? Why, exactly, at the outset of his campaign, has he seized on the shallowest, most demagogic theme available?

Now it could be that he has seized on the shallowest theme for the same reason that he has chosen as his vice president the shallowest candidate—because shallowness stirs him most deeply and fosters his confidence, because only fortified by cliché is he able to find access to a spontaneous public self. Anything necessitating utterance more complicated or original seems to reduce the public man to awkward role-playing and emotional posturing.

However, by pointedly challenging Dukakis's allegiance to the very idea of national allegiance, Bush appears to me to be up to something more unsavory than merely armoring himself with banalities. As permissibly as he can, like a gentleman—yet in a code whose meaning cannot but filter through to those awaiting the message—he is drawing attention to the aura of foreignness emanating from Dukakis's name and appearance, the foreignness that the Democrats tried to paper over at their convention by writing *their* clichéd melodrama of America's immigrant heritage. Bush's question, "What is it about the Pledge of Allegiance that upsets him so much?" does not go so far as to suggest, even subliminally, the ludicrous charge that Dukakis secretly harbors an allegiance to another country like Greece or Russia (or Harvard). Rather, through admirably artful innuendo, the question manages to insinuate that there is something that remains unnaturalized in a man called Dukakis, an ineradicable alienness that prevents him from standing in the same easy, automatic, unchallengeable,



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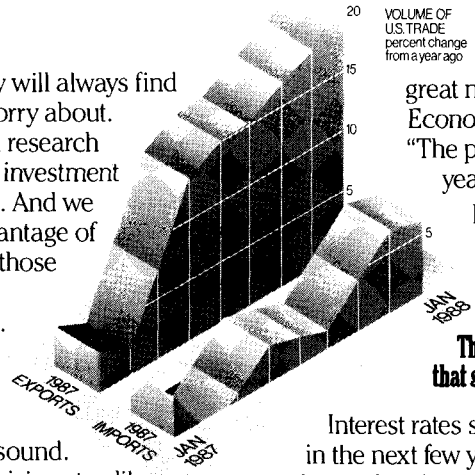
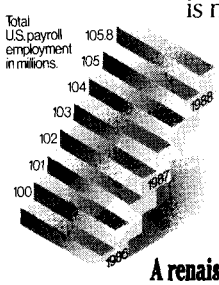
# With so many things to worry about why are we so optimistic?

Those inclined to worry will always find things in the economy to worry about. But the fact is, Merrill Lynch research shows that many untapped investment opportunities are unfolding. And we believe the time to take advantage of them has arrived. Here are those trends. And what the astute investor can do about them.




## Economic forecast: Up, down, then up again.

The basic economy is sound. Personal income has been rising steadily for the last few years. The unemployment rate is near a 14-year low, and the gross national product is advancing at a healthy pace. While our research shows the possibility of a recession next year, it should be modest in length and degree. And economic growth should resume by the end of 1989.

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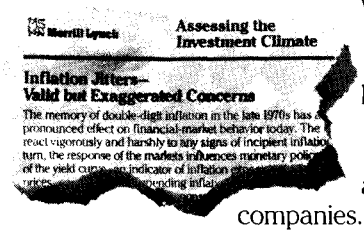

Merrill Lynch
Assessing the Investment Climate
Inflation Jitters—Valid but Exaggerated Concerns
The memory of double-digit inflation in the late 1970s has a pronounced effect on financial-market behavior today. The react vigorously and harshly to any signs of incipient inflatio turn, the response of the markets influences monetary poli of the yield curve is an indicator of inflation

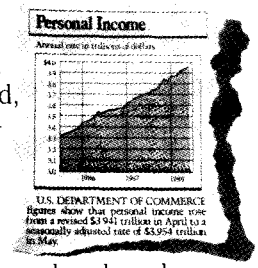
We also see emerging opportunities in selected high-yielding stocks such as those of utilities and insurance companies. And, as Merrill Lynch Chief Investment Strategist Charles I. Clough points out, "Foreign investment flows into dollar-denominated financial assets are likely to be increasingly supportive of the U.S. financial markets."

## Inflation is up. But not severely.

While the drought in the Midwest is boosting food prices, the overall effect should be neither great nor long-lasting. As our Chief Economist Don Straszheim puts it, "The peak inflation rate, based on year-to-year changes in consumer prices, is likely to be about 5.5%, far below the 14.5% peak in the second quarter of 1980."

## The interest rate outlook. Something that should make everyone feel optimistic.

Interest rates should decline substantially in the next few years. This would be spurred by moderating inflation, slower economic growth in 1989, and a rising surplus in the Social Security trust fund, which will make the government a bigger customer for its own debt, reducing the amount it must raise from the public.


Personal Income
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE figures show that personal income rose from a revised $3.941 trillion in April to a seasonally adjusted rate of $3.954 trillion in May.

This means that U.S. Treasury bonds and high-quality corporate and municipal bonds—which are now paying healthy interest rates—are also likely to increase considerably in value.

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seemingly hereditary relationship to America and the Founding Fathers as a George Herbert Walker Bush or a J. Danforth Quayle.

I don't believe that when Bush described the children of his Mexican-American daughter-in-law as "the little brown ones" he intended to be anything other than playfully affectionate about beloved grandchildren whose appearance is a bit unexpectedly outside the family mold. What he was trying to demonstrate was his emotional largess, the breadth of his tolerance and not its limitations. The clumsy remark confirms, however, what I might have surmised anyway from his politics and his privileged background—that he is highly sensitive to, and sometimes, perhaps, like many millions of Americans, guiltily discomfited by, the physical signs of ethnic or racial difference. Surely neither Bush nor his campaign advisers have failed to observe that the marriage of a Greek-American to an American Jew could seem a somewhat too exotic—if not a downright outlandish—union to those voters whose most nostalgic desire, especially in a renewed period of massive immigration, is for Andy Hardy's vanished America. You will recall that in Andy Hardy country, the picket fence was white, the people housed behind the fence were white, and, what is more, the people in those houses were white in a particular way that Governor and Mrs. Dukakis are not—in a way, I should add, that even some of the vice president's grandchildren are not, at least in his eyes.

It might, at first, seem generous to suggest that the vice president is himself unconscious of the nature of the appeal that he is making and that the last thing he would want to do is to stir up xenophobic longings for pure, homogeneous, picket-fence America. But if the man really does *not* recognize the resentment and intolerance and suspiciousness that underlie the notion of patriotism he is espousing, then, to speak bluntly, he is blind and ignorant. And if he is to be the president, I for one would feel safer knowing that beneath all those gollies and wows and darns, he was merely unprincipled and cynical.

**PHILIP ROTH**

Philip Roth's new book *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* has just been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Executing druglords is absurd.

# DEAD WRONG

FEDERAL PRISONS are filling up with narcotics dealers. Convicting drug traffickers is turning out to be easier than finding cell space for them. Why not just give 'em a fair trial and hang 'em?

That question has been raised by Vice President Bush, New York Mayor Ed Koch, and the Senate Republican Task Force on Drugs, among others. All have recommended capital punishment for drug dealers, though with some ambiguity about whether the ultimate sanction should be imposed for dealing or only for drug-related murders. And the Omnibus Drug Bill of 1988 is likely to have some such provision when it reaches President Reagan's desk.

IT'S EASY, and accurate, to deride such plans as election-year demagoguery, but attacks on motives are no substitute for policy analysis. Would the death penalty help control drug abuse? More precisely, how many dealers would we have to execute every year to make a substantial dent in the drug problem?

Put that way, the question is largely one of economics. Illicit drugs are expensive because drug dealers face risks that tobacconists, for example, do not face. Drug dealers hazard both the penalties of the law—imprisonment and forfeiture—and the penalties of the lawless: violent death at the hands of competitors, dissatisfied customers, and thieves. (Many of the 20,000 or so annual murders in the United States arise from drug transactions.) Drug dealers' earnings reflect the extraordinary risks of the trade, just as the wages of stunt men and high-rise construction workers reflect the risks of their trades.

The death penalty, in effect, would raise the rate of fatal "industrial accidents" in the dope industry, thus raising the cost of doing business. As that cost, like all costs in competitive markets, is passed along to consumers, the result would be higher prices and reduced consumption. The size of the price increases would depend on the number of executions.

Over the past decade W. Kip Viscusi and colleagues at Northwestern University, among other scholars, have studied the effects of industrial accident rates on wages. Each additional annual death in a job category seems to add between $1 million and $5 million to the total wage bill. That is, if there are two otherwise identical jobs, each with 10,000 workers, but Job A has one fatality per year and Job B two fatalities, annual earnings per worker in Job B will, on average, be $100 to $500 higher than in Job A.

Now assume that next year, and every year after that, we execute 100 drug dealers—more executions than have been carried out in the United States in the past ten years combined. And assume that the impact on wages is at the high end of Viscusi's range. If each execution adds $5 million to the drug industry's wage bill, 100 executions will impose new costs of $500 million.

Annual sales in the illicit drug market are about $50 billion per year. So a $500 million cost increase passed through to consumers will generate a price increase of one percent. The resulting decrease in consumption is anybody's guess, but coffee, tobacco, and alcohol appear to have what economists call "relatively inelastic demand"; if illicit drug consumers are similarly committed to their habits, then a one percent price increase would lead to a consumption decrease of less than one percent, perhaps substantially less.



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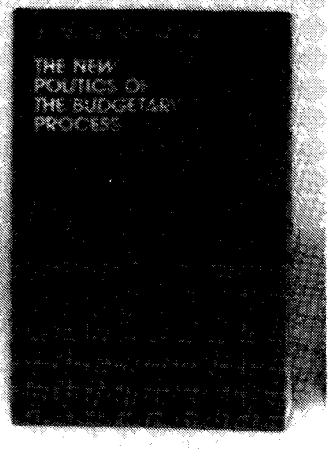


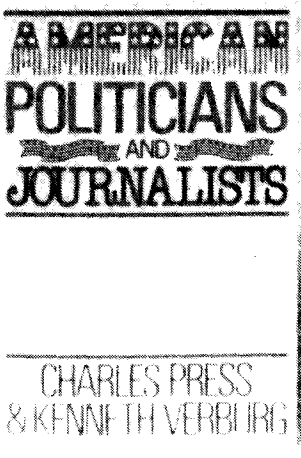


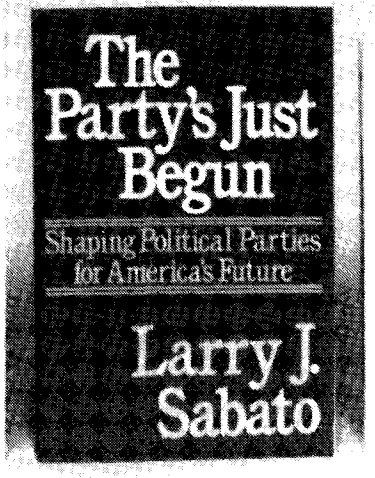


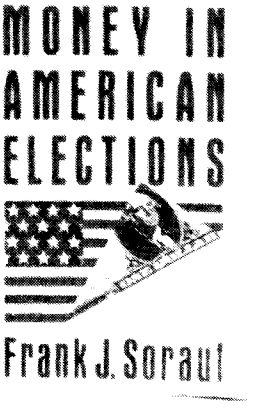


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Of course, nothing says we have to stop with 100 executions a year. Five hundred, by these calculations, would increase the price of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana by five percent; a thousand, by ten percent. There are no limits to this game other than your imagination, the public's stomach, and the capacity of the courts to try the cases and hear the appeals. (The formula, remember, is "give 'em a fair trial and hang 'em"; the fair trial is not optional.)

In the case of cocaine, a ten percent increase in price would mean that a gram of pure cocaine would retail at $110 rather than $100. That's not much of a recovery from the cocaine price collapse of the 1980s; a pure gram cost $500 back in 1981.

"The mountain has labored, and brought forth a mouse." A $10 increase is a pretty small mouse to emerge from a mountain of a thousand corpses, especially when you consider that the Reign of Terror in post-revolutionary France involved no more than a thousand executions a year.

And these estimates may well overstate the bang-per-body. Indeed, if execution were reserved for drug-related murders, rather than being extended to all high-level drug dealing, it could end up defeating its purpose. After all, most drug-related murders involve the killing of drug dealers. If capital punishment cut down on such murders, the result might be *lower* drug prices due to *reduced* industrial hazards.

LOWER DRUG PRICES might be a social cost worth bearing in return for fewer murders. But if the goal is preventing murder, what difference does it make whether the killing is drug-related? Is a drug murder more heinous, or easier to deter, than a domestic murder, a contract murder, a political murder, a rape-murder, a robbery-murder, or an arson-murder?

Punishments can be justified either by their effectiveness or their appropriateness. Execution is a morally appropriate penalty for crimes that deny their victims' humanity: premeditated murder, felony murder (killing, whether intended or not, in the course of a violent crime), and forcible rape. That justification holds good even if the actual effects of executions on the murder rate are too small to measure. Extending capital punishment to transactional crimes such as drug dealing has a somewhat more tenuous rationale. And doing so before making execution a common punishment for murder and rape seems almost inexplicable, unless executions would greatly reduce the volume of illicit transactions. The calculations above suggest that even hundreds of executions per year would leave the drug markets virtually unchanged.

Killing people—publicly or privately—isn't something to take lightly. That's the whole point of reviving the custom of executions for murder: to reinforce the idea that killing a man is incommensurably more serious than lifting his wallet or cheating the tax collector.

When we talk of killing, we should do so with a decent solemnity, and with as much moral and intellectual seriousness as we can muster. It takes a special cynicism—or a desperate need to distract the public from eight years of drug policy disaster—to use "the death penalty for drug kingpins" as a cheap applause line in a speech.

**MARK A. R. KLEIMAN**

Mark A. R. Kleiman was director of Policy and Management Analysis in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice from 1981 to 1983. He now teaches at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. His book on marijuana enforcement will soon be published by Greenwood/Praeger.

Noriega's man in Washington.

# SPENCER FOR HIRE

"ILLEGAL DRUG use," says President Reagan, "is the foremost concern in our country." Vice President Bush wants the death penalty for drug kingpins. Meanwhile, though, Bush faces continuing embarrassment over questions about his and the administration's relationship with one particular drug kingpin: Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, ruler of Panama, and paid CIA asset since the late 1960s (including the period during 1976 to 1977 when Bush served as director of Central Intelligence). In February a federal grand jury in Miami brought a 12-count indictment against Noriega for his role in a multibillion dollar drug operation in collaboration with the Medellín cocaine cartel.

Bush's political difficulties have been compounded by Noriega's unwillingness, under pressure from U.S. officials, to abdicate power and get out of Panama. Noriega insisted that the indictments against him be dropped. The administration for a time seemed willing to make that deal, but presidential candidate Bush began feeling the political heat. Seeking to distance himself from the Noriega specter, Bush declared in Los Angeles: "I won't bargain with terrorists, and I won't bargain with drug dealers either, whether on U.S. or foreign soil."

Bush may like to say that he will not bargain with the likes of Noriega, but one of his senior campaign advisers has been paid by the Panamanian government to bargain *for* Noriega. Stuart K. Spencer—a confidant of President Reagan and the man now running the Dan Quayle division of the Bush campaign. According to Justice Department records, Spencer served as a representative of Panama and a director of the Washington consulting firm Bill Hecht and Associates (now Hecht, Spencer, and Associates), which received roughly $350,000 from Noriega's government during a 12-month period in 1985-86. According to former Panamanian officials and colleagues who worked with him, Spencer and the firm were paid to advise Noriega and lobby Congress and the Reagan administration



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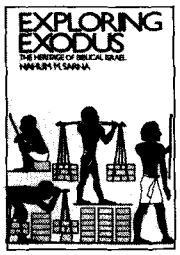


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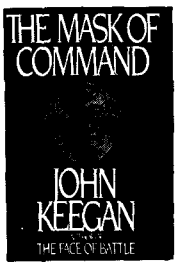


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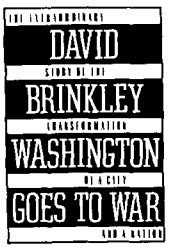


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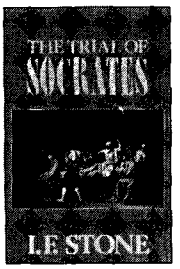


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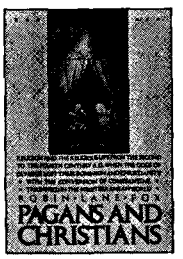


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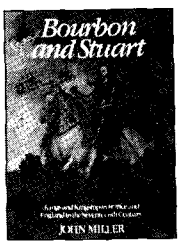


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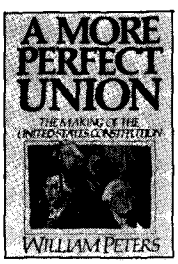


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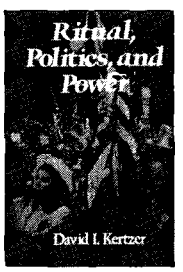


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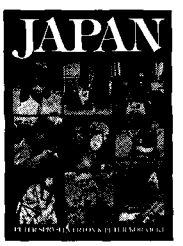


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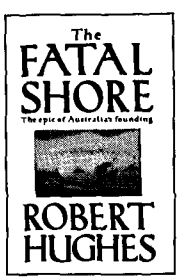


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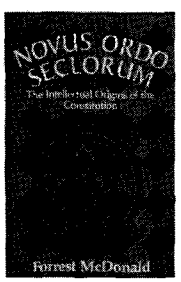


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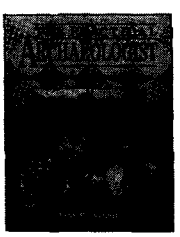

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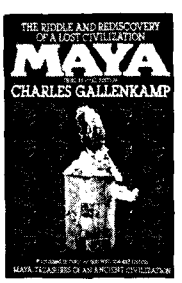


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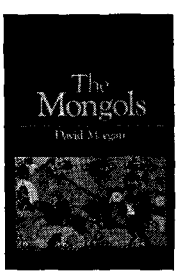


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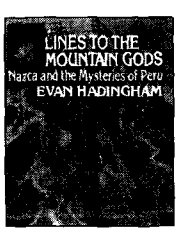


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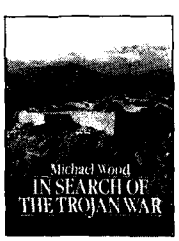


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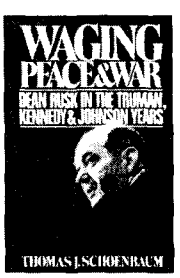


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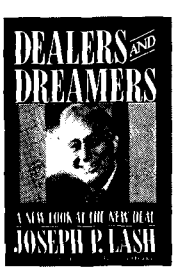


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on matters that included federal investigations of Panamanian involvement in the drug trade.

Spencer is a veteran California political operative who ran Reagan's first campaign for governor of California and helped plan his 1980 and 1984 presidential races. Former White House chief of staff Donald Regan said of Spencer in his memoirs: "[A]lthough he has never held any official position in the administration, he is one of the few people licensed to speak his mind to the president and his wife on all subjects and has the audacity to do so. The Reagans have formed the habit, over many years, of listening very carefully to what he says."

Col. Roberto Diaz Herrera, Noriega's former chief of staff now in exile in Venezuela, says he first heard of Spencer when Noriega told him one day: "You're going to be visited by a big fish, someone very close to Reagan." Diaz Herrera said he understood Spencer's role to be "a sort of liaison in search of Noriega influence with Reagan, a friend of Reagan who could effectively sell Noriega's image to Reagan."

THE ARRANGEMENT with Spencer's firm, Bill Hecht and Associates, began in October 1985, one month after Noriega had dismissed Panamanian president Nicolas Ardito Barletta—whom he had installed in a fraudulent 1984 election—for attempting to investigate the murder of Dr. Hugo Spadafora, one of Noriega's most outspoken critics. Spadafora, who had publicly accused Noriega of involvement in the drug trade, was abducted several days after meeting with U.S. drug enforcement agents. On September 14 his tortured and decapitated body was found stuffed in a U.S. Mail bag in a field in Costa Rica. The Costa Rican police report said he had last been seen in the custody of members of the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF).

The death of Spadafora and the firing of Barletta touched off an international uproar. Noriega, until then little known outside Central America, was condemned as a killer and usurper of civilian rule. Noriega turned to the Spencer firm. "They were put in the icehouse for about six months because everybody was saying they had dumped a legally elected government," recalls John Connolly, a Spencer associate who handled the Panama account. Connolly flew to Panama and signed a six-month consulting contract, dated October 24, 1985, calling for $75,000 up front and another $75,000 in January. The firm agreed to provide "counselling regarding the effect on the [Panamanian] GOVERNMENT . . . of actions undertaken or under study by the Congress and the Government of the United States . . . meet periodically with prominent members of the Congress and the Government of the United States" and "work out, together with the [Panamanian] NATIONAL GOVERNMENT and subject to its approval, the strategy to attain the proposed objectives."

The contract was signed by Dr. Jorge Abadia Arias, Noriega's minister of foreign relations. The contract was countersigned by Eric Arturo Delvalle, who was installed as president after the ouster of Ardito Barletta. Delvalle had obeyed Noriega's wishes and canceled the planned commission to investigate the Spadafora murder. He said it would violate the Panamanian Constitution.

"People would tell us, 'Oh, you're lobbying for Noriega,' " Connolly recalls, "and we'd explain that no, they have a president, his name is Delvalle and he's a graduate of LSU [Louisiana State University]. . . . Our mission was to boost the image of Delvalle. My job was to say 'It ain't what you heard, give Panama a chance.' " Noriega, Connolly now says, "wasn't running the country every day—he wasn't interested in letting out driver's licenses or paving streets—but he certainly had a veto power over anything he cared about. . . . He wasn't a man to cross."

"They were lobbying for Noriega," says Jim Lucier, an aide to Jesse Helms, who led a Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigation of drug dealing and corruption in Panama. "They said we were making a big mistake to go into this stuff and that there wasn't any evidence that would link Noriega to it, particularly the Spadafora case." Connolly confirms that the firm defended Noriega against the charge of killing Spadafora, and says that "we don't think he did it." As for the ouster of Barletta, says Connolly, "Noriega was obviously involved, but there were elements in Panama telling me that the problem with [Barletta] was that they waited too damn long to get rid of him." The firm countered congressional visits by members of the Spadafora family, and fended off attacks against Noriega on other fronts as well. In February 1986, when Congress was trying to reprogram foreign aid away from Panama, "we saved what we could of the program," says Bill Hecht.

According to Connolly, Spencer's firm also lobbied against a resolution introduced by Helms calling for an "investigation of drug dealings by Noriega." "We had several letters from U.S. drug enforcement thanking Noriega and the Defense Forces for their cooperation in arresting traffickers and we'd bring them around to Congress," Connolly recalls. "There *were* drug arrests in Panama," Connolly adds. "There was a story to tell and we told it."

ON FEBRUARY 26, Spencer and Hecht flew to Panama for an eight-day stay, during which the second $75,000 payment was wired to the firm's account at a Washington bank. Hecht says they met with Noriega, who said the drug charges against him were unfounded. During the second week of May, Spencer returned to Panama and the firm was signed on for a $75,000 three-month extension of their soon-to-expire contract.

On June 12 the *New York Times* published the first in a series of front-page reports by Seymour Hersh detailing evidence held by the White House and U.S. intelligence agencies implicating Noriega in the international narcotics trade. The story touched off a cascade of coverage. "They were hard blows," says Connolly. "It just hit like dynamite. . . . I remember being over at the embassy when the first piece came out. The general happened to be in Washington for the retirement ceremony of a U.S. general he knew." The Spencer firm marshaled its resources to help the Panamanians respond to the Hersh reports. "I don't think that any-



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body really believed those too seriously then," Hecht says, "because I don't think any of them are true."

According to Connolly, the firm encouraged the Panamanian Embassy to prepare lists of Panamanian drug arrests to distribute to Congress. The firm also brought Panamanian officials, including the attorney general, to Capitol Hill to talk about the drug eradication programs of the Noriega-Delvalle government. "The drug thing was our main thing, it was kind of exciting." Connolly says their lobbying on the drug issue continued through the fall of 1986.

In August 1986 the firm won another $75,000 three-month contract extension. In November the firm tried, and failed, to win a third extension. "They essentially told us they were broke," Connolly says.

Joel McCleary, a former Carter administration official who worked for the Noriega government from 1984 through 1986, helped arrange the Panamanian contract for Spencer's firm, received a consulting fee from the firm, and now represents anti-Noriega Panamanians, says that Spencer's "job was to find out where the administration's Panama policy was going, and what the U.S. was planning to do." McCleary says that early in 1986, he and Spencer both advised Noriega to lower his profile and place Delvalle in a more prominent role. He says Noriega got angry at both of them as a result.

Connolly, whom Hecht identifies as the firm's expert on the Panama account, says he knew of no problems with General Noriega. Connolly says he believes Spencer "tried to tell Noriega: 'stuff like this looks good, stuff like that looks bad.' Stu is a great guy for the pulse of America. He knows what looks good."

The Panama deal, according to the Justice Department filings, brought Spencer's firm a total of $359,627.16 ($299,923 in fees [minus transfer charges] and $59,704.16 in expenses), the largest sum paid to any Panamanian agent in the United States during that period. During the course of the contract, the firm's members reported making a number of political contributions. The largest was a September 17, 1986, contribution by Hecht of $1,000 to the Dan Quayle Senate campaign.

Connolly says Spencer now serves as vice chairman of Hecht, Spencer, and Associates. Documents that Spencer filed with the Justice Department in September 1985 list him as director of Bill Hecht & Associates. Spencer, who lives in California, has a consulting firm on the West Coast as well, Spencer, Roberts and Associates. From 1983 through 1985, Spencer, Roberts, working jointly with Bill Hecht & Associates, received at least $350,000 for representing the government of South Africa.

**ALLAN NAIRN**

Allan Nairn is a free-lance writer based in New York. Research assistance for this article was provided by Amy Goodman and Jessica Cowan.

A: yes, just barely.

# IS BENTSEN A DEMOCRAT?

## BY MORTON M. KONDRACKE

IF THE oft-cited parallels between the presidential races of 1960 and 1988 play themselves out in full, Senator Lloyd Bentsen will carry Texas for Michael Dukakis and help him win the election, but in the process he will sacrifice power and prestige in the Senate for a vice presidency filled with frustration, isolation, and humiliation. Given the policy differences between Dukakis and Bentsen—which on foreign policy and so-called "values" issues like gun control and school prayer are nearly total—and given Dukakis's reputation for disdaining people who disagree with him, Bentsen would seem a likely candidate for the get-lost treatment that the Kennedy White House gave Johnson, and Johnson, in turn, gave Hubert Humphrey.

Bentsen, fully aware of the dismal history, says with what sounds like cool conviction: "It isn't going to happen to me." As documented in a report just issued by the Twentieth Century Fund, he says, the vice presidency has changed to the point that its occupant is now a trusted adviser to the president. In a long meeting prior to his selection, Bentsen says, Dukakis assured him that "he'd want me in the loop . . . to be broad-ranged, not given specific assignments or a schedule of access once or three times a week." Bentsen said that before agreeing to run, he also checked with Senator John Kerry, formerly lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, to determine that Dukakis actually will listen to advice from people who disagree with him.

Most convincingly, though, Bentsen indicates that he is not the sort of person to be shunted aside while mistakes are being made in the Oval Office. "I have seen so many big businessmen head down to the White House saying, 'I'm going to tell the president this' and 'I'm going to tell him that,' but when they get down there, they melt. I don't melt."

He says that with the self-assurance of one who has



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rarely failed in life and is utterly secure in his belief system. And Bentsen has every reason to be self-confident. He has been successful in everything he has ever tried in war, business, or politics except for a 1976 run for the presidency. He may not be the most innovative or eloquent of politicians, but his record suggests he would be an assertive vice president, even a tough one, at least about making his views known to the president.

SOME MIGHT WISH he were weak or passive, rather than merely soft-spoken and patrician, because many of his views are conservative—or, as some opponents describe them, corporatist and Republican. It's true: Bentsen has been a consistent defender of business interests and a beneficiary of their campaign contributions. He supported Ronald Reagan's tax cuts in 1981. Indeed, he sweetened them with accelerated depreciation breaks for business. He still supports most of Reagan's foreign and defense policies, including the Nicaraguan *contras*, the 600-ship Navy, the MX missile, and the B-1 bomber.

He was a late-in-the-day convert to tax reform, doing his best beforehand to exact special benefits for the real estate and oil and gas industries, the aching backbones of the Texas economy. "I have never seen him lift one finger for fairness," one tax reformer said. He is no believer in global free trade, either. If not a protectionist, he wants to use threats of U.S. trade barriers to force foreign countries to open their markets for American business. In appreciation for all this, and for his power as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, he is the biggest single Senate recipient of campaign contributions from business PACs. As is well known, he wanted to charge business lobbyists $10,000 a head to have breakfast with him. He returned the money when someone blew the whistle, but rest assured: it's back in his campaign coffers now anyway.

And yet, there are redeeming features to Lloyd Bentsen's record. According to political sage Horace Busby, formerly a Texan, "Lloyd Bentsen was never a Republican in disguise or a Republican waiting to happen." Whereas other conservative Texas Democrats like John Connally and Phil Gramm actually changed parties, Bentsen did not, nor was he ever tempted. To the contrary, in 1982 he used his campaign treasury and vote-drawing power to help elect Texas populists, including State Treasurer Ann Richards and Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower, and since then he has helped them stay in office. This has largely healed the wounds opened in 1970, when he defeated liberal Senator Ralph Yarborough by implying in TV ads that Yarborough, an opponent of the Vietnam War, was somehow responsible for anti-war riots such as the 1968 Democratic convention disorders in Chicago.

Furthermore, Bentsen may have aided Reaganomics at the lift-off, but within a year he began to see that the combination of tax cuts, defense hikes, and tight monetary policy would lead to big deficits, so he opposed the third stage of tax cuts for individuals. He is surely pro-business, but not slavishly so. In 1984, when it was clear that tax breaks were engendering overbuilding of real estate in Houston and elsewhere, he tried to narrow the loophole, arousing the ire of the real estate lobby. He is a longtime booster of cuts in capital gains tax rates, but for budget-balancing reasons and to keep tax reform intact, he doesn't support George Bush's proposal to bring top-bracket capital gains rates down to 15 percent.

This year, he pushed for plant-closing notification to workers as part of the trade bill—albeit after eliminating provisions sponsored by Edward Kennedy and Howard Metzenbaum that he thought would block corporations from shutting down at all. He also helped win Senate passage of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's welfare reform proposal, after securing temporary limits on the costs that welfare-wary Texas and other states would have to pay to guarantee assistance to two-parent families. "He was a quiet, stalwart shepherd for this legislation," said an aide to Moynihan. "He did not detract from the sponsor's role, as some chairmen do, but he was there when we needed him and he brought other conservative Southern Democrats along."

There are yet other encouraging complexities to the Bentsen record. In 1970, the year he beat Yarborough and Bush to get elected to the Senate, a member of Bentsen's church in Houston was summarily fired as he was about to have his pension vested after 30 years of employment. The man died shortly afterward. When Bentsen got to Washington, he became co-sponsor of pension reform legislation long advocated by Senator Jacob Javits but stymied in the Finance Committee. The law passed in 1973. Bentsen's own family has been touched by tragedy—one of his six grandchildren died of cancer, another is mentally retarded, and a third was brain-damaged at birth—leading Bentsen to be one of Congress's most determined sponsors of child-health legislation. This year Bentsen moved to get children's illnesses covered under catastrophic protection legislation, and expanded Medicaid benefits for prenatal care.

WHAT ALL of this amounts to is that Bentsen is a moderate—conservative by the standards of the national Democratic Party, but hardly right-wing in the context of Texas. "He's a strong advocate of economic growth," said fellow Texas Tory George Christian, formerly Lyndon Johnson's press secretary. "He's a lot like LBJ and most of our successful politicians in Texas. He doesn't want to pull anyone down, but to see to it that everybody gets a piece of the pie." The principle is that of capital formation—the idea that business, if given breaks by government, will invest, grow, and create jobs.

The philosophy certainly sells politically in Texas, especially when combined with a liberal record on civil rights and social and foreign policy conservatism. Bentsen was born in a bungalow on a dirt road in what is still the poorest region of America—the Rio Grande valley of Texas—but while he was going to school and speaking Spanish with the children of Mexican farmhands, his father was amassing a land empire now estimated to be worth between $50 million and $100 million. In World War II, Bentsen was a bomber pilot and squadron leader who once piloted a stricken plane from Austria over the Alps to a



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crash landing in Yugoslavia, for which he won the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In 1948, at 27, he became the youngest member of Congress—elected by employing one of the first campaign consultants ever to take part in a Texas race and by copying nearly word-for-word (but featuring a B-24 instead of a PT boat) the war-hero campaign literature used by John F. Kennedy in Massachusetts. He served three terms, demonstrating independence as one of two Texas congressmen to vote against the poll tax in 1949. Then he quit politics for business because, he says, a congressman then earned only $12,500 a year and advancement was so slow that Sam Rayburn's best argument for staying was that Bentsen might become Speaker in 25 years.

Bentsen borrowed $7 million from his father, moved to Houston to escape his family's immediate influence, and set up an insurance company and a holding company that bought real estate, a savings and loan, and a gas distribution company. Thanks to the Texas economic boom of the 1950s and '60s—"and by risk-taking," Bentsen says—he is now worth more than $10 million. Of the four candidates on this year's two presidential tickets, he has made the most money by virtue of his own efforts and investment, although Republican veep candidate Dan Quayle's family fortune is supposedly worth anywhere from $50 million to $200 million.

Bentsen returned to politics in 1970, beating first Yarborough and then Bush by margins of 53 percent and 47 percent respectively. He defeated Bush because liberal Democrats—though furious over the Yarborough defeat—were offended by Spiro Agnew's interventions on Bush's behalf, and because rural conservatives were offended by Nixon administration school desegregation suits filed in East Texas. Bentsen got re-elected with 57 percent of the vote in 1976 and 59 percent in 1982. This year, like Lyndon Johnson in 1960, Bentsen is running for both vice president and senator, and is able to spend nearly $9 million extra on ads and a Democratic get-out-the-vote campaign.

OVER THE YEARS—and this year is no exception—Republicans have been unable to decide how to attack Bentsen. Some have tried making him out to be "liberal Lloyd," focusing on his support for minimum wage increases and his pro-choice position on abortion, but that clearly does not square with his Tory background or with his opposition to school busing and gun control. Other opponents have labeled him, more appropriately, "loophole Lloyd," for his tax positions, but most Texans seem to welcome his protection of local industries, especially in a recession.

This year the formal Bush campaign strategy is to ignore Bentsen and focus attention on Dukakis, attempting to convince Texas voters that he is a liberal without redeeming features. In late August, Bush spent four days in the state, hammering at Dukakis on foreign policy, his veto of a Pledge of Allegiance requirement, and the likelihood that Democrats would raise taxes. The Republicans had hoped to open a substantial lead of eight to ten points before Labor Day in order to allow Bush to campaign elsewhere in the country and discourage Democrats about the prospects in Bentsen's home state.

A *Dallas Morning News* poll published on September 4, however, shows Bush leading Dukakis by just three points statewide, 47 percent to 44 percent, and a poll paid for by Bentsen's Senate campaign shows Bush ahead 47 percent to 43 percent. This suggests that the race will be tight all the way and that Bentsen's selection was a wise move, forcing Bush to spend time and resources to hold his home base. While the Republicans will not mention Bentsen directly, some party officials are quietly urging Texans to "vote twice for Texas"—to support Bentsen for senator (and chairman of the Senate Finance Committee) over his Republican opponent, Representative Beau Boulter, and then vote for Bush for president.

Bentsen, meanwhile, is trying to make the case that the Reagan administration has been "indifferent" to Texas and let it slide into recession despite Bush's presence in Washington and the state's overwhelming support for Reagan in two elections. Bentsen will avoid personal attacks on Bush—they have numerous common political friends and draw campaign contributions from many of the same donors—and apparently the Dukakis campaign will not insist that he do so. His main tack is to portray Dukakis as "one of us"—someone capable of restoring prosperity to the state.

IN AN INTERVIEW, Bentsen insisted that Texas voters can be won over by Dukakis pledges to increase spending for education, research, and investment to make American industry and workers more productive and competitive. "We're not for an industrial policy that favors one industry over another," he said. "Government is not that smart. But we're for more days in the classroom for American students, more research centers, and more Sematechs"—cooperative efforts by industry to develop high-tech breakthroughs such as semiconductors.

This is scarcely stuff to stir people's souls, especially when the opposition is demagoging through Texas on social issues and patriotism. But Bentsen has credibility in his home state, and a track record of knowing a politically potent issue when he sees one. In July 1980 he advised Jimmy Carter on the telephone to jump aboard a Senate Finance Committee initiative to cut taxes, rather than blaming the nation's problems on malaise. Carter hesitated, but on another telephone Bob Dole got Ronald Reagan to endorse it immediately.

In 1985, similarly, Bentsen and a Republican colleague, John Danforth, urged the Reagan administration to take steps to coordinate economic policy with the industrial allies and cause the dollar to sink in relation to other currencies. That eventually became Treasury Secretary James Baker's key international economic policy. In 1986 he convinced his party to make trade deficits a key legislative initiative and political issue, and the 1988 trade bill—despite protectionist flaws—is his major accomplishment. Bentsen is no liberal, but he's no Republican either, and if he helps get Dukakis elected, Dukakis ought to listen to him. □



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Adventures in fact checking.

# ARE YOU COMPLETELY BALD?

## BY RICHARD BLOW AND ARI POSNER

WHEN MOSES CLIMBED Mt. Everest to receive the Eleven Commandments, he didn't submit them to "fact checkers" before delivering them to the Buddhists waiting below after their 60-year trek through the Mojave Desert. But "fact-checking"—a stage in the editorial process where someone attempts independent confirmation of every "fact" in an author's manuscript before its publication—is an established and much-cherished institution of American journalism. Or at least some corners of American journalism, primarily magazines. For practical deadline reasons, newspapers don't have independent "fact checkers," relying instead on their reporters and editors to get things right. Nor do book publishers usually make any effort to reconfirm the facts in manuscripts they publish. Yet oddly, newspapers and books are the main sources fact checkers use to "check" the facts they approve for publication.

If we sound a bit defensive on this point, it's because THE NEW REPUBLIC has no fact checkers either. This is partly for deadline reasons, partly for financial reasons, and partly because of philosophical doubts about whether devoting limited resources to catching the kinds of things fact checking catches is the best way to serve the larger cause of printing the truth. TNR does make mistakes, often embarrassing ones. A while back, for example, we called the victim of New York's famous "preppy murder" Jessica Levin, not Jennifer. A few weeks ago we gave one of our own authors a middle initial he does not have.

But even regarding accuracy of this narrowest and most arid sort, it's not our impression that we do much worse than other publications that invest large chunks of money and prestige in fact checking. Even the *New Yorker*, the Vatican of fact checking, is prone to trivial errors. Writer David Owen, a former fact checker himself, says that a one-paragraph review of his book *High School* in the *New Yorker* had him graduating from college in the wrong year and mislocated the school that was the book's subject.

What TNR does miss out on, undeniably, is the peculiar world of fact checking, a culture full of lore and legend. This culture recently got some publicity in Jay McInerney's novel *Bright Lights, Big City* and the movie that was made from it starring Michael J. Fox. Fox prepared for the role by working for a week as a fact checker at *Esquire*. According to Larkin Warren, *Esquire*'s head of research, Fox was assigned to check a recipe for blackberry pie. He called a Manhattan bakery and read someone the recipe. "The baker got very irate and said, 'Young man, I don't know who the hell you are, but that pie is going to explode if you don't poke some holes in the top.' " Fox ran into Warren's office "screaming that he'd saved America."

Fox was experiencing the thrill of fact checkers' high, a high that has no necessary correlation to the importance of the fact. In a way, the more obscure the fact the bigger the rush. Dan Shaw, an editor and former fact checker at *New York* magazine remembers one article in which an author described something as sounding like "the ball bearings in a can of Krylon spray paint." To see if there really were ball bearings in Krylon cans, Shaw tracked down the manufacturer, called the company, fought through layers of somewhat incredulous bureaucracy, and was finally told that after a half century of using ball bearings, the company had recently switched to marbles. The effort went for naught when the writer told Shaw that he preferred his original simile, and was allowed to keep it. But Shaw knew that he had done his job.

Jennifer Roberts, a former *New York* fact checker, remembers checking a grisly article about an art dealer suspected of murdering his homosexual lover. "There was one sentence that read, 'The victim was found wearing the sort of tit-clips that you would find at the Pink Pussycat,' " a Manhattan sex shop. "So I had to call this place and say, 'Excuse me, do you sell tit-clips?' And they said, 'Yes, ma'am, we do.' So I had to ask, 'Well, um, what are those anyway?' "

The theory of fact checking is that even the tiniest details are part of a larger whole, like bricks in a building. For the sake of credibility—a term fact checkers invoke with reverence—*all* the facts have to be right. "If we get the color of someone's shoes wrong, that destroys some of the credibility of the article," says Bruce Bibby, head checker at *Premiere* magazine. It also affects the reader's faith in the magazine. If one brick crumbles, the whole structure is weakened.

Of course, perfect accuracy, however admirable as a goal, is impossible to achieve. And one difficulty with fact checking is that the least relevant facts often require the greatest effort. Jill Bauer, a former checker at *Esquire*, once had to check whether those popular study guides are called *Cliffs* Notes or *Cliff's* Notes, with an apostrophe. She bought a copy, only to find that the

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name was written one way on the cover and the other way inside. So Bauer tracked down the founder of Cliff's Notes, an old man named Cliff who lives in "Nebraska or something." (Heck, why should she be more accurate than that? It's our story, not hers.) Mr. Cliff thought the matter over for a while, then said, "Oh, it don't matter, it can go either way." It's this kind of experience that causes most fact checkers to move on after a year or so in their jobs.

SOME, HOWEVER, become addicts. Thomas Teal, fact checker at the *New Yorker* for many years, proudly recalls uncovering a glitch in a short story about sailing on the Indian Ocean. (Yes, they fact check the fiction, too.) The story included a character's entries in a ship's log, and Teal actually plotted the boat's imaginary course. To his delight, he discovered that the ship could never have sailed the distance the author said it did. He plotted a new course, checked it with the author, and added it to the story. "I knew nobody would notice the difference," says Teal. "But there's a certain aesthetic pleasure in just knowing it's correct."

Bruce Bibby of *Premiere* used to work at *Rolling Stone*. He recalls checking a movie review there in which the writer, Gerri Hirshey, described actor Mel Gibson as the proud owner of a "taut tush." Bibby, who had just seen the movie, was of the definite opinion that "Mel Gibson's tush was anything but taut." He says, "I felt that quite strongly, and tried to get her to use another word." He tried, Hirshey recalls, for two days before she finally prevailed. "I really thought it was a question of aesthetics at that point," she says. Not so for Bibby. "That's just the kind of thing I don't like to let go through," he says with conviction.

The relationship between fact checkers and writers is delicate. Some writers rely on checkers to do their homework for them, riddling their supposedly complete manuscripts with the abbreviation "TK," short for "to kum," meaning the information will be supplied later—often by someone else. (The abbreviation is used by journalistic convention to alert typesetters that it isn't part of the story.) Some writers resent the efforts of underpaid, anonymous drones to improve the quality of their work. Fact checkers at *Esquire* aren't allowed to talk to Norman Mailer. Gore Vidal is also said to be hard to check. "They think we're tinkering with the muse," says one checker. And some writers even display both these moral failings at the same time.

The strongest complaint we heard about an imperious author involved psycho-journalist Gail Sheehy. When her influential profile of Gary Hart, "The Road to Bimini," was being checked by staff members at *Vanity Fair* last year, one of them noticed something wrong. A line Sheehy had attributed as an indirect quotation to Hart—How'd you like to party with the next president?—had actually been attributed on an entirely different occasion to Warren Beatty, who was referring to Hart. When queried about the line, the checker recalls, Sheehy said to leave it as it was because it sounded better coming from Hart. Sheehy added that because Hart was a public figure, he'd never sue. Sheehy not only got her way, producing one of the most damaging lines in a devastating article, but she was right: Hart didn't sue.

Sometimes, though, writers' complaints seem justified. Fact checkers can be maddeningly literal minded. One writer recalls turning in a book review to *Fortune* in which he was accusing the book's author of pandering to the prejudices of corporate executives. The author, he wrote, "knows his audience." This appeared in print as: the author "knows a substantial fraction of his audience." Rick Stengel at *Time* recalls writing for the magazine's science section about the relics discovered aboard an ancient Greek galleon in the Mediterranean. "I ended up with a flourish about all this happening 'there beneath the sea that Homer called 'wine-dark.' " As Stengel left work that Friday he noticed a checker perusing copies of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The next time he saw his story, his ending read, "There beneath the sea that Dickens called 'slate-grey.' " It turned out that the fact checker couldn't find the Homeric reference, so she flipped through a copy of Bartlett's Quotations, looked up the word "sea," and substituted the next best thing.

In their defense, fact checkers say that the best writers appreciate being checked, and that checkers only infringe on a writer's territory when the writer hasn't done his or her job. Not a single fact checker interviewed for this article said that he or she had ever checked an article that didn't have at least a few mistakes. Tom Teal of the *New Yorker* once informally surveyed an issue of the magazine. He found that before checking the issue contained about 1,000 mistakes. "You have to convince the writers that you're trying to help them," says Jay Merritt at Condé Nast's *Traveler*. "You say, this is more for your benefit than mine. I'll only be fired if you're wrong, but you'll be disgraced in public."

ONE OF THE touchier issues between writers and checkers is how to check a fact that comes from an anonymous source. Many magazines get around the problem by simply telling the checker who the source is. Checkers can then call and pretend not to know that source's identity, or explain that they know but promise not to tell anyone else. The *New Yorker* gets around the problem by allowing some writers to leave information "on author"—in other words, the magazine simply trusts the author. This exception applies to only a tiny fraction of the facts checked, but by its nature this is the most crucial fraction. Thus the policy tends to undermine the claim that accuracy in tiny, irrelevant details is indicative of accuracy in larger, important ones.

The other delicate relationship for fact checkers is with the people who are the subjects of articles they're checking. (Not every fact, after all, can be found in the *New York Times*.) Several people claim to have been the hero of the famous anecdote about the checker who had to call



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someone and ask him, "Are you completely bald?" Other variations on this warhorse: "Would you say that you're pleasantly plump?" "Is it true that one of your arms is shorter than the other?"

Sometimes the checker's trauma goes beyond mere embarrassment. Jennifer Conlin was a checker at *American Lawyer*, where she was assigned to check an article on Libby Zion, a young woman who died because of poor treatment at New York Hospital. The article charged one resident with indirect responsibility for Zion's death. The resident wouldn't speak to the author. "So I had her paged at the hospital late one night, and she came to the phone," Conlin remembers. "I told her who I was, and that I had to run all these allegations by her. I had to say . . . , 'basically she died because of your negligence.' The resident didn't say anything, she just started crying. But my editor patted me on the back and congratulated me." (In the ultimate test of fact-checking machismo, the *American Lawyer*'s editor in chief, Steven Brill, purposely puts made-up facts in his articles to see if the checkers catch them.)

When Dan Shaw was checking an investigative article on the sad decline of ex-beauty queen Bess Myerson for *New York*, he was surprised to pick up the phone one day and hear Myerson's voice. "She said, 'I want you to look into your heart and ask yourself if this is the right thing that you are doing.' " Shaw says he wasn't swayed, although he adds that he's often seen new fact checkers adopt the source's side of things, a sort of journalistic Stockholm Syndrome.

But a checker's life is not all tragedy. Ava Plakins, once a fact checker at *Esquire*, had to verify the magazine's July 1980 article on the invention of the vibrator, called "For The Woman Who Has Almost Everything." The original draft quoted one vibrator entrepreneur, Tex Williams, as saying that he had devised the product to help his then-wife, as she was unable to have an orgasm. *Esquire*'s lawyers insisted that Plakins call Williams's ex-wife to confirm this. With some trepidation, she did. The ex-wife's reaction: "That son of a bitch! Did he tell you that the reason I couldn't have an orgasm was because he was a premature ejaculator?" Plakins got the two to call each other—the first time they'd spoken in years, she says—and they eventually agreed that both had their shortcomings in the bedroom. Everyone was happy, including *Esquire*, which printed both sides of the story and didn't get sued.

NOT GETTING SUED is, in fact, a large part of the purpose of fact-checking operations. In the end fact checkers are the gatekeepers not of truth, but of consequences. That's one reason fact checkers are so happy to rely on previously published newspapers and books, even though these media publish "facts" far more cavalierly than the magazines that rely on them. In the fact-checking culture, however, the hunger for a "paper trail" for every fact can't entirely be explained by the need for legal self-protection.

One writer for *Time* tells of being asked to supply the source for a particular quote. "I confessed to her that I no longer had the original source because I'd gotten it out of a book I'd written. She immediately brightened. 'Oh, it's in a book,' she said. 'Then it's OK.' She asked for the name of the book and the page number, and considered the fact checked. As long as it was in a book, she didn't care who the author was."

IF A FACT can't be found in a book, a newspaper will do, though not all newspapers are equal. The *New York Times* carries more weight than the *New York Post*. "It sort of ends up like Euclidean geometry, in which 'The *New York Times* is right' is your initial building block of reality," says Walter Shapiro, a senior writer at *Time*. The *Times*, of course, has only as many fact checkers as any other newspaper: none. Another newsweekly reporter recalls working with a fact checker on a story about Representative Jack Kemp and the gold standard. The reporter offered the checker Kemp's actual position paper on the subject. "She waved it away. She preferred to verify it using a clip from the *Wall Street Journal*."

James Ledbetter, a former checker for the *Wilson Quarterly*, remembers checking an article on the subject of transportation in the era of Andrew Jackson. The author had written that the Cumberland Road, a turnpike, cut the traveling time between Baltimore and St. Louis from "TK" to "TK." Ledbetter finally found "some guy at a historical society in Ohio" who said, "I don't think anyone's ever figured that out." Three days later, the man called back and said he'd come up with a mathematical formula indicating that the turnpike had cut traveling time from four weeks to 94 hours. Ledbetter admits he had no way of judging the man's formula, but the fact went straight into the magazine, where it is now a matter of historical record.

Once such a fact is printed, it takes on a life of its own. In a 1964 *Harper's* article on newsmagazines, Otto Friedrich told the story of the *Newsweek* researcher who tried to determine the size of what a writer had called "the 00-man Sudanese army." But nobody knew the size of the Sudanese army, even the Sudanese Embassy in Washington. The editor told the checker to make an "educated guess." He guessed 17,000 men. Several weeks after the story appeared, he got a call from the Sudanese Embassy official he'd spoken to earlier. The official said he now had the answer to the checker's question: 17,000 men.

The moral, of course, is that facts aren't really that important. A few factual errors don't undermine the crucial essence of a story. After all, it hardly matters whether Michael J. Fox did his practice fact checking at *Esquire* or *Vogue*, or whether it was a blackberry or banana cream pie. The important thing is that he brought dignity to the downtrodden profession of fact checking with his Oscar-winning performance as Bob Woodward in *All the President's Men*.

Or whatever. □



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# STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

## Premises, Premises

Is there a sanity test for producers? The question recurs through the years. Box-office failure is not what raises the question: no one—not Steven Spielberg or George Lucas—can be sure of a hit every time out. The point is that the premises of some films are so dreadful that, even in the world of Movieland romance, the rationality of the producers seems doubtful. Maybe their trade association needs some sort of examining and licensing process.

*Rocket Gibraltar*
(Columbia)

*Crossing Delancey*
(Warner Bros.)

*Vibes*
(Columbia)

*Clean and Sober*
(Warner Bros.)

I concentrate on producers, not writers, because no one expects objectivity in the author of a script. But the objective judges who read and decided to produce the following scripts seem, as Johnny Carson says, not to be playing with a full deck.

*Rocket Gibraltar* is about a 77-year-old man, Burt Lancaster, who tells his seven or eight grandchildren about Viking funerals. The whole family is gathered at his Long Island home for his birthday, and when he dies of a heart attack during the visit, the children sneak his body out of the house, take it to the beach in a van, and put it in a boat they have fixed up like a Viking ship as a present for him. They then send it out to sea and, with flaming arrows, set fire to it. What's more, when their various parents find out what's happened, the grown-ups are moved, and sit down on the beach with the kids to watch grandpa go bye-bye in flames. End of film.

Now this is not just a bad idea. It's absolutely bonkers. No matter that the rest of the script, by Amos Poe, is so wooden that those who turned the pages, may have got splinters. No matter that it's basically a rerun of the *September* idea, which was antique when Woody Allen dusted it off: a family gathering in which everyone has a problem. No matter that with every possible sentimental aid—a man with heart trouble and a grizzled beard, who was a blacklisted screenwriter (nothing is made of this), who loves Billie Holliday and Fred Astaire and fishing—Lancaster can't draw our tears. It's as if, in front of a fireplace with a well-laid fire, he can't find the matches.

No matter about all these flubs. The climactic idea, toward which the whole picture moves, is nutty.

Or take *Crossing Delancey*, written by Susan Sandler. A hip young New Yorker, Amy Irving, who works in a smart uptown bookshop and mixes with the authors who give readings there, falls for a young man, Peter Riegert, who runs a pickle store on the lower East Side. Riegert had spotted her three years before, sitting on a bench with her grandmother, who lives in the pickle neighborhood, but had waited for a marriage broker to introduce him—even though he's been thinking about her for those three years. This, we're told, is the behavior of a man who is a well-spoken college graduate, perfectly at ease when he visits the uptown milieu. Why he is satisfied with his briny life, why he never utters a word about leaving it, why the smart woman wants him are all more of the general unreason, ignored so that cute uptown-downtown contrasts can be made.

Riegert and Irving contend honorably with their pasteboard characters. Reizl Bozyk as the grandmother and Sylvia Miles as the marriage broker give caricature Jewish performances that make Martin Landau's hyperbole in *Tucker* look conservative. Still, better performances, though they'd relieve us of Bozyk-Miles embarrassment, wouldn't basically improve the picture. The premise is just too forced to let us care.

In *Vibes* by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, two New Yorkers, Cyndi Lauper and Jeff Goldblum, are Manhattanites who meet as ESP subjects, then, through circumstances I can't remember—but no one in the picture seems to remember them either—get involved in a dangerous treasure hunt in South America. Unlikely farce-adventure, like *Romancing the Stone*, is fine if it's funny. *Vibes* is not funny, just unlikely.

Lauper is a road-company Madonna. (The film credits say that she has two Image Consultants. She needs more.) Goldblum is severely uncomfortable when he's away from wall-to-wall carpeting. Peter Falk, as a comic gangster, is as likable as ever. Good or bad, they all drown in this hooey.

A total of about 15 producers chose these three scripts and worked on them—for months, possibly for years, day after day. Think of it. After a picture is launched, I suppose the producers can't afford to stop; or possibly, as they plod along, they lose perspective, which is a sort of blessing. But why were these pictures launched in the first place?

A lot of films that have amused a lot of us—*Midnight Run* is a current example—are credible by standards that pertain only within the four walls of a movie the-

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

*A Fish Called Wanda*. Farce, often clever, about Anglo-American cooperation in a London bank heist. John Cleese, a barrister who gets involved, is as deftly daffy as ever. (Reviewed 8/29/88)

*The Last Temptation of Christ*. Utterly serious, occasionally moving. The key sequence, which shows Jesus experiencing marital life, then returning to the cross and transcendence, is done soberly. Willem Dafoe is honest and strong as Jesus, Martin Scorsese directs with feverish conviction. (9/12&19/88)

*Midnight Run*. Robert De Niro and Charles Grodin, as captor and captive going from NY to LA, are excellent. The plot that keeps them together is a drag. (8/29/88)

*Pascali's Island*. An Aegean island, 1908. Intrigue, sub Graham Greene. But Ben Kingsley is uncannily fine as a Turkish informer; Charles Dance and Helen Mirren as conspirators are flavorful. (8/8&15/88)

**SK**



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ater. But when a screenplay doesn't come near those standards, when our disbelief scoffs at the very idea of its suspension, we have to suspect the competence of the people who chose to produce it. How much talent, experience, and savvy would it take to see that the three scripts above were fledgling turkeys?

To change figures, *Clean and Sober* is a different kettle of spoiled fish. It has a good premise. The protagonist, Michael Keaton, is a yuppie drug addict who gets in bad trouble with the police. The only place he can find to hide is a drug rehabilitation clinic, which will protect his privacy: names of patients are not given out. He enters. Complications follow.

So does the spoilage. The writer, Tod Carroll, after he has begun his story well, simply doesn't know where to take it. In the clinic Keaton meets a woman, of course—a steelworker, well played by Kathy Baker. Carroll noses into one possibility after another, including working-class and yuppie-class conflicts, but he has no confidence in any path he chooses and only knots his story more and more as he goes. Finally, he cuts the knot with a dull knife—an accident—that has been in filmmakers' hands since about 1900. In *Clean and Sober* a usable premise is abused.

Other troubles, too. The Keaton character doesn't change in any way. He doesn't even stay the same interestingly. Carroll fails either to get sympathy for him or to make him fascinating as a degenerated smoothie. Two hours of his company is too much.

Keaton doesn't help. It's one of those performances that are tagged as Oscar material chiefly because they are long and contain tantrums. (Smashing up furniture = emotional acting.) When Keaton isn't in a tantrum, he sniffs and twitches to show us how unactorish he is. To me it's all superficial, what good actors call "indicating"—acting that's been practiced in front of a mirror. Keaton is like a TV-commercial car salesman who has strayed onto the wrong set.

# MARK STEVENS ON ART

## Direct Male

On the cover of the catalog for Robert Mapplethorpe's retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York is a photograph of Apollo, a close-up of a marble bust in profile. The choice of Apollo seems peculiar, to say the least, but it is also telling. Mapplethorpe is an idealizer, a photographer of classical impulse and detachment who is fascinated with the poetry of proportion and the music of the body. He brings to almost all his pictures exquisitely balanced rhythms of light and shadow and beautifully calculated arrangements of shape. His photograph almost seduces Apollo into life: the caress of light makes the marble glisten with the moistness of flesh; the lips part with the warm breath of desire. The god descends to the almost human, just as many of Mapplethorpe's models rise to the almost divine.

Yet Mapplethorpe is no ordinary Apollonian. Raunchy scenes of sadomasochism, muscular black men with large penises, and exceedingly randy flowers are some of his favorite subjects. This highly unusual crossover of the classical into the marginal makes Mapplethorpe both original and enormously admired. (He will also be the subject of a retrospective at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.) Mapplethorpe has been particularly fortunate in his critics. In the Whitney catalog, Ingrid Sischy and Richard Howard present two passionate, very different, but not quite persuasive cases for his work.

Sischy addresses the moral import of the photographs. Mapplethorpe invites such a response, of course, for he makes a point of being shocking: a famous self-portrait shows him dressed in leather with a whip protruding from his ass. "Secrecy is an old tale when it comes to the subject of sex, and his pictures explode it," Sischy writes. "They have enormous consequences for the deepest split in our collective opinion about sex: Should it stay in the dark or be brought into the light?" For Sischy, Mapplethorpe's "frightening pictures bear urgent witness." They help liberate us from repression and ignorance. "This is work that is ultimately about no cover-up, no censorship, no shameful secrets,


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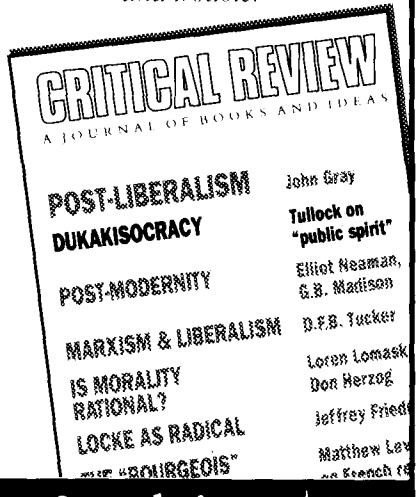
*"Public spirit is the* deus ex machina. *If its prevalence is granted, there is no reason why voters should go to the polls. Public-spirited officials would carry out public-spirited actions and we could all save time and trouble."*

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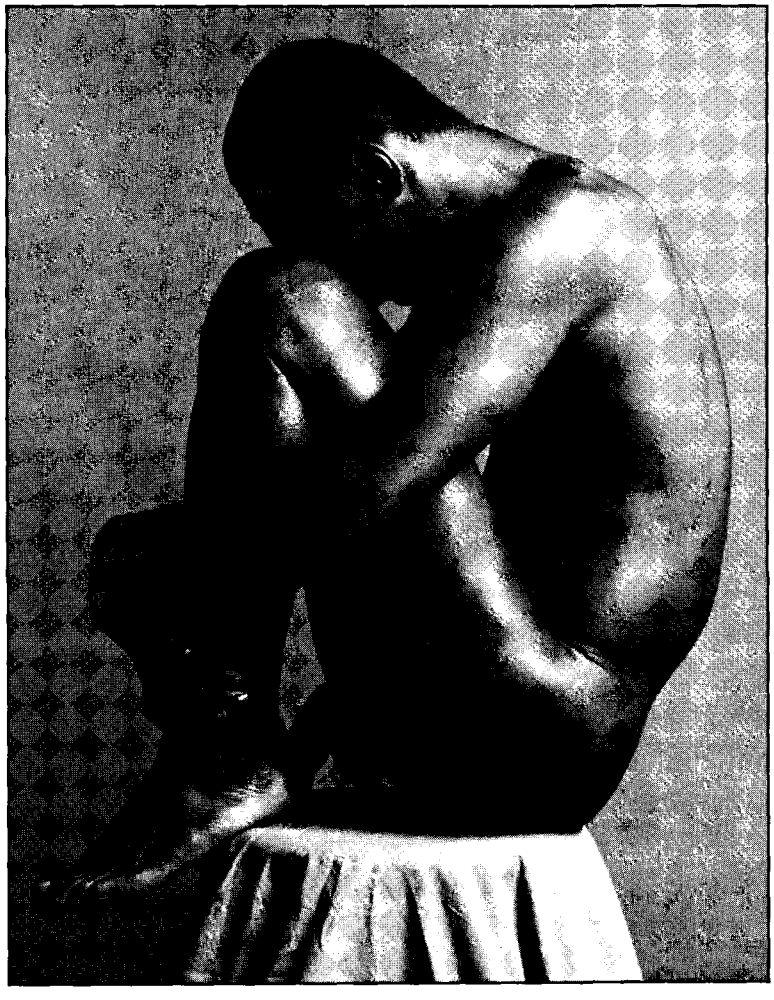
no burial of what should be seen and remembered." Mapplethorpe highlights "those very details that symbolize our history of splits."

Sischy also defends the photographer from several familiar lines of attack. The rapturous, idealizing photos of glistening black bodies have sometimes aroused talk of racism, and of fascism and superman aesthetics. Mapplethorpe admittedly shows little interest in white men of slack muscle and small endowment; but as Sischy rightly argues, he does not condescend to his black subjects. These are not sentimental Western projections of a natural man. They appear powerful and self-contained in their own right. Sischy also argues that Mapplethorpe's pictures have actually "redistributed assets such as strength and pride in the banks of mass-media and art-historical imagery, which have always short-changed the accounts of women and people of color." Mapplethorpe, she says, often upsets cultural stereotypes of weak and strong, as in his pictures of the musclewoman Lisa Lyon. Even the high gloss appeals to Sischy, who rejects the charge that his pictures of sex "are too 'fashionable'—too polished, too aestheticized." The glossiness is one of his "sharpest devices," she writes. "By making his subjects so fashionable, he makes knowledge of them fashionable instead of something dirty."

I can understand what Sischy says, but I don't quite see what she means. With the exception of the portrait of a mysteriously grinning Louise Bourgeois carrying a sculpture of a penis, I find none of Mapplethorpe's photographs especially unsettling, let alone "frightening" or "bearing urgent witness." I don't think I'm alone. The crowd at the Whitney did not appear in the least disturbed as they browsed among the buttocks and the flowers. At this late date, anyone who pays attention to art is much too aware of shock as an orthodox modernist device to be easily shaken. It may be true that not many artists have treated naked men and homosexual desire with the frankness of Mapplethorpe, but countless artists have portrayed the marginal and the outcast.

More important, the pictures themselves work against "bearing urgent witness." Everything is too pretty and too posed to be truly unsettling. So much passion goes into the fuss of framing, of technical bravura, of the formally just-



*AJITTO*, 1981

so. Even the picture of Mapplethorpe and the whip is curiously unaffecting; it is so staged that we feel safely distant, part of an audience. Instead of forcing people to confront the forbidden, in other words, Mapplethorpe makes the forbidden tasty, which is not a route to moral power in art. If knowledge of his subjects becomes fashionable instead of dirty, as Sischy suggests, that is an achievement more of rhetoric than of art.

An artist of moral strength must bring a sense of sufficiency to his subject. A portrayal of sadomasochism demands, I would have thought, something raw, an expression of the warping power of secrets, of the undertow of guilt, of the exciting smell of fear, if we are to believe it has been justly presented. There are any number of photographs in Peter Weiermair's new and fascinating study of the male nude, *The Hidden Image: Photographs of the Male Nude in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (MIT Press, 190 pp., $39.95), that are less polished than Mapplethorpe's, and therefore more powerful.

As for the big and black, I doubt many viewers will think Mapplethorpe's celebration of black strength helps right a social wrong. They will more likely be impressed with Mapplethorpe's personal obsession—for his models are a highly exaggerated version of humanity. Nor will many viewers grow more tolerant of sexual diversity than they already are. In Sischy's opinion, Mapplethorpe's unabashed art brings a cleansing light to the sexual darkness. It helps overthrow the tyranny of secrets. Indeed it does, up to a point. But her passionate hope is too naive. People also love the secrets, love the darkness; and some subjects need the secrets and the darkness. A totally free and tolerant approach yields its own terrors.

Richard Howard savors the many pleasures of Mapplethorpe's photographs—the "victoriously fulfilled flesh," the "potential orgasmic flowering." But he, too, senses something more. Mapplethorpe has made of the male genitals "a quite recognizable expressive identity, though one for which our culture has no accommodation." More important, the constant erotic pressure pushes Mapplethorpe's art toward the transcendent. In the figure studies, for example:

> The burden of their enormous effort—in which the camera is compelled to acknowledge desire with an avidity not just optic but haptic—is that of the body's implicit *energeia* to rise, to mount, to erect



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itself into an insurgent principle.

Mapplethorpe's light often emerges from darkness. The flesh seems a restraint, bearing down on "what aspires to rise." Having once regarded Mapplethorpe's photography as "grim with the restrictive occasions of obsession and fetishism," Howard now sees many photographs as "emblems of contested mortality, grave with the contradictions of organic life in their aspiration to ecstasy."

Mapplethorpe's art seems to rise in other ways, too. The nudes are often placed in a compressed or uncomfortable situation. A famous series of four pictures, *Ajitto* (1981), displays a powerful black nude seated, his body folded up, on a very small pedestal. He is all potential, a bud about to unfold. Mapplethorpe's rendering of light and detail (exposing every tiny hair on a human leg or a vegetal stem) has a concentration beyond the power of the human eye; details become a divine distillate. Not least, many of his models display a confidence not quite of this world. Asked by Susan Sontag what he does with himself when he poses for the camera, he replied that "he tries to find that part of himself that is self-confident." A studio photographer, Mapplethorpe uses the posing, one feels, to give both artist and model time to settle into a particularly strong self.

I find the perfection of the Mapplethorpe nudes flawed by immodesty—of the aesthetic, not the sexual, kind. Artists who are interested in a highly formal and perfected look are frequently prey to a specific kind of hubris, to a showoff quality that typically manifests itself in too much pride in surface, and in size, and in the things that most easily impress. The great classical artists certainly have their moments of pride in picturing the human body, but they do not seem to exaggerate when they idealize. They sense the limits of perfection and make that intuition part of their effect. (The Japanese know that a perfectly formed pot is not the most beautiful vessel.)

At the same time, Mapplethorpe's rise toward transcendence often dissipates into glamour. He has made a point of not playing favorites with subject matter, shooting a celebrity much the way he shoots a plant. The Whitney installation emphasizes this flattening approach. Next to a giant picture of a man whose cock is hanging out of his pants hangs a ravishing picture of baby's breath. A


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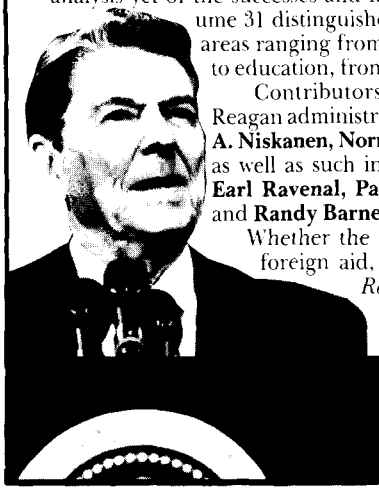

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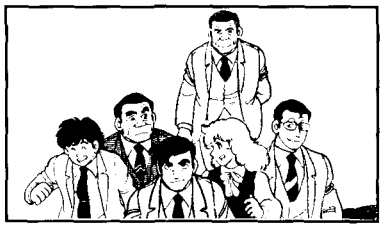

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portrait of Princess Gloria von Thurn und Taxis is nearby. I suppose you could argue that this is an example of divine evenhandedness, but it seems more like fashion's refusal to discriminate among effects.

Anyone who can successfully make celebrities, sadomasochists, and lilies hang happily together in a show at the Whitney is an interesting photographer—but also, I think, a curiously orthodox artist. Mapplethorpe is easy to like. His work honors the principal concerns of the art world over the last 30 years: formalist esthetics, high fashion, and marginal or outrageous subject matter. He takes his sources, such as Edward Weston and George Platt Lynes, one step further. He makes brilliant photographs that (with one or two exceptions) present homosexual desire as conventionally unconventional. Except to those who are threatened by homosexuality, however, these photographs will seem cozy. That's the surprise.

# ODD MAN IN

## Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform by Jerry Hough

(Simon and Schuster, 301 pp., $19.95)

## Gorbatchev: l'URSS va-t-elle changer? by Michel Tatu

(Le Centurion, 268 pp., Fr.99)

For four days late in June, 5,000 delegates in the Palace of Congresses of the Kremlin debated the future of *glasnost* and reform. The Soviet Union had seen nothing like it since the 1920s. The delegates spoke their minds freely before tens of millions of their fellow citizens, who sat before their television sets night after night, watching long, uncut segments of each day's events. This unprecedented national town meeting moved the Soviet public as nothing Gorbachev had done before, finally bringing the reality of *glasnost* into every living room.

Another stunning victory for Gorbachev? On the face of it, certainly. Gorbachev won approval for sweeping changes in the structure of the Communist Party and the Soviet government. Party and state officials will henceforth be limited to two consecutive five-year terms in office. All leadership positions, high and low, will be filled by elections with multiple candidates (from one party), secret ballot, and provisions for recall. Throughout the conference, Gorbachev dominated the proceedings with the force of his personality, interrupting speakers from the chair, admonishing the delegates, totally overshadowing his Politburo colleagues.

Still, Gorbachev did not have things entirely his own way. In fact, he had summoned a Party conference in the first place out of frustration over resistance to his reform program. His idea was to reach over the heads of the Party bureaucracy to the rank-and-file Party membership to gain a strengthened mandate for his policies. Above all, he wanted to purge the Central Committee of the mostly conservative lame ducks who had already been retired from the jobs that normally carry Central Committee rank, and who now make up about 20 percent of the Central Committee's voting membership. Gorbachev intended to bring in his own new appointees, and to consolidate his support.

But beginning last winter Gorbachev's plan appeared to fall apart. The idea of tampering with the Central Committee membership evidently aroused so much opposition that Gorbachev dropped it. The election of delegates was delayed for several weeks while the Politburo debated the voting procedures, and when the elections finally began there were widespread reports of rigging by the Party apparatus. Only Gorbachev's direct intervention secured the election of a handful of leading reformers to the Moscow delegation, but in the provinces the Party professionals won handily. Moscow reformers feared that the Conference would be so dominated by conservatives that Gorbachev would suffer a humiliating public defeat.

The delegates proved to be an astoundingly feisty bunch, in some ways precisely what Gorbachev must have wanted. They drowned out long-winded speakers with rhythmic applause, thundered against long lines and bad food, and blasted the planners, the ministers, and even the leaders themselves. But their message was also overwhelmingly conservative: speaker after speaker denounced muckraking liberal journalists, demonstrators, unofficial political clubs, private entrepreneurs, and the spread of "petit bourgeois, consumerist attitudes." One of the most conservative speakers, the Russian nationalist writer Yuri Bondarev, expressed the delegates' distaste for the materialist thinking behind Gorbachev's reforms when he exclaimed, "Aren't we already looking at the sun and the sky through a ruble note?"

But the most stunning speech of all was Yegor Ligachev's. He is the Party second secretary. While praising Gorbachev personally, Ligachev cast doubt on the entire proposed package of reforms. "Politics," he snapped, "is not the same thing as slurping down cabbage soup." He endorsed the opinions of the most conservative speakers, and called, in barely veiled terms, for the dismissal of the most liberal editors, Vitalii Korotich of *Ogonyok* and Yegor Yakovlev of *Moscow News*. Not since the 1920s has a second secretary stood out so clearly as a public personality. And never before have a second secretary's public views contrasted so sharply with those of the leader.

Thus the 19th Party Conference will be remembered as marking the full and open emergence of what one might call the neoconservative tendency in the Soviet elite. The neoconservative delegates discovered one another, they took courage as they realized their own numbers, they applauded their own sentiments, they found their own leader in Ligachev. From their speeches one could discern not exactly a platform, but a definite consensus. They are not Brezhnevites. They do not want to go back to the past. But they want curbs on the media; they want tight limits on private enterprise; they demand discipline and order; and they insist, above all, on the Communist Party's monopoly of power. This was the power elite of the Party speaking, and what it said, loud and clear, was that it will defend its position.

All the more astonishing, then, that all of Gorbachevs reform package was approved by the Party Conference (though not without some dissenting



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votes, another first since the '20s). The reform could, if fully implemented, weaken the Party's power and change the face of Soviet politics. Gorbachev plans to shut down a large part of the ruling Party apparatus and transfer its functions to the hitherto powerless bodies called the "Soviets." (The word "soviet" in Russian means council. The Soviets are vestigial legislative and executive bodies; they are, in principle, the official government at each level of the system. But in practice, they have been totally overshadowed since the Revolution by the apparatus of the Communist Party.) At the top of the system, he is creating a new "Congress of Soviets," of which he himself will become president. In the entire package Gorbachev made only one major concession (it may not even be a concession, but just common sense), namely, that the local chiefs of the Party apparatus will also serve as chairmen of the local Soviets. All of this will come to pass in short order: the first meeting of the new Congress has been scheduled for next April. Soviet citizens, especially Party members, will be spending a lot of time in their secret voting booths between now and then, voting for those multiple candidates.

THIS BRINGS US to the central puzzle of the Party Conference. If this conservative gathering was so resolutely determined to defend its power, why did it agree so readily to reforms that could seriously weaken it, or even put it out of business? If Gorbachev was not strong enough to make the personnel changes he wanted to make, or to control the elections to the Conference, how was he able to push through, virtually without change, a package of measures seemingly far more radical? In short, how strong is Gorbachev, and how strong is the neoconservative resistance to him?

Western Russia-watchers have been sharply debating these questions ever since Gorbachev came to power, and they are deeply divided over the answers. New books by two of the West's top half-dozen experts on Soviet politics show just how far apart the professionals can be on this question. Jerry Hough, a political scientist at Duke University and the Brookings Institution, believes that Gorbachev is very strong. Last year Hough wrote that Gorbachev had become as strong as Stalin was in 1929. Michel Tatu, a distinguished journalist for the French newspaper *Le Monde*, holds


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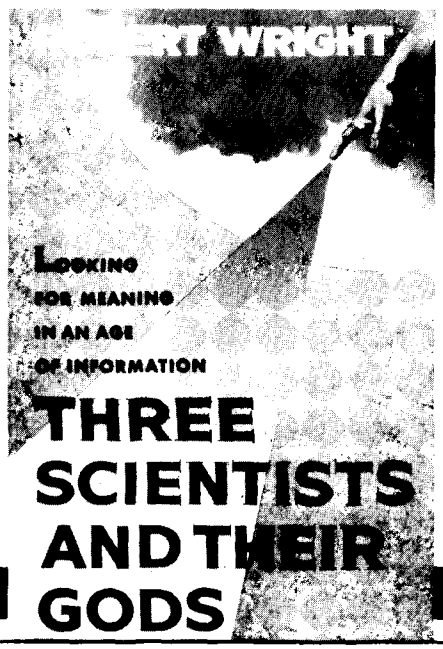


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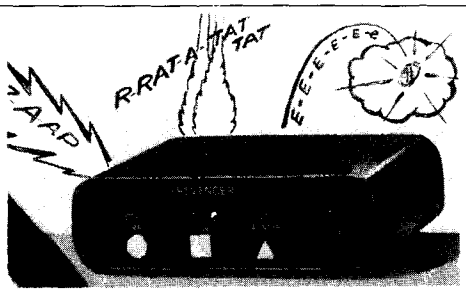


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that Gorbachev is weak. He ends his book with a portrait of Gorbachev neutralized by a conservative opposition, and increasingly in danger of losing his job, even of being assassinated. (Tatu's book has been a best seller in France, and that last hint caused a sensation, not least in Moscow.)

WHOM should we believe? These are not off-the-cuff judgments. Both books contain the best and the most up-to-date interpretations of Gorbachev's rise, and of his consolidation of power. Both men rely on much the same facts, but they reach different conclusions on every part of the story. For Tatu, Gorbachev's early career as a southern Party functionary was exemplary, but otherwise classic in its basic design. For Hough, it was "one of the most atypical" from the start. Tatu interprets Gorbachev's promotion to Moscow as Party secretary in 1978 as an effort by "non-Brezhnevians" (in particular, by the "gray eminence" Mikhail Suslov) to provide a long-term alternative to the Chernenkos and the Tikhonovs with whom Brezhnev was surrounding himself. Hough, by contrast, portrays Brezhnev himself as one of the groomers, who saw Gorbachev right away as a man with star political quality. For Tatu, the key to Gorbachev's success was discretion, even dissimulation. For Hough, it was promise: from the moment he hit Moscow, Gorbachev had "all the look of an eventual reforming successor."

The differences increase as the two analysts move on to Gorbachev's role under Andropov. Both agree that Andropov was Gorbachev's most important patron. But Tatu depicts Gorbachev's position under Andropov after 1982 as one more step in the gradual rise of a protégé; indeed, he speculates that Andropov may have brought Leningrad Party boss Grigorii Romanov to Moscow to serve as a counterweight to Gorbachev (while simultaneously severing Romanov from his political base in Leningrad, a move that chess players would savor). Hough disagrees: even before Andropov was elected general secretary in 1982, Gorbachev had become "a kingmaker as much as a protégé." Andropov nailed down his own victory by allying himself with him. In the deal between the two men, Gorbachev gained control of cadres appointments as early as 1983. "Andropov not only treated him as the heir apparent," Hough writes, "but permitted him to oversee a large amount of personnel change." For Tatu, by contrast, Gorbachev had only "a say" in cadres appointments under Andropov.

This last difference is crucial for what follows. The central puzzle of the Gorbachev story is how this extraordinary political reformer got elected general secretary by one of the most conservative leaderships on earth. Tatu's explanation is that Gorbachev concealed his cards so well that the members of the Politburo (including Andrei Gromyko) did not realize what a dangerous man they were voting for. Hough's view is more controversial. The Politburo saw Gorbachev perfectly well for what he was, but it elected him anyway (if reluctantly) because by March 1985 Gorbachev had built up such strong support in the Party apparatus that he could have won a showdown vote in the Central Committee if the Politburo had tried to pick anyone else.

THESE FUNDAMENTAL differences of interpretation on Gorbachev's rise are complemented by equally conflicting accounts of Gorbachev's consolidation of power since March 1985. For Tatu, Gorbachev began as a classic newly hatched general secretary: still only first among equals, still part of a "collegial" leadership, and therefore obliged to keep hiding his hand while slowly building up a following. (It was a process that, on past experience, would take five years.) This explains, for Tatu, why Gorbachev showed none of his reformist intentions during his first year.

By the same token, Gorbachev was not strong enough at the outset to choose new members of the Politburo on his own. Tatu believes that the men promoted in 1985 (especially the trio of Ligachev, Chebrikov, and Ryzhkov) owed their initial rise to the antechambers of power to Andropov, and their final step into the Politburo was part of a package deal that made Gorbachev general secretary. This was especially true of Ligachev, the second secretary. Gorbachev did not yet have full control of cadres appointments at lower levels, either. While an unprecedented number of jobs changed hands throughout the government and Party, few of the new appointments could be traced to Gorbachev's patronage, and turnover in the new Party Central Committee elected after Gorbachev's first year was disappointingly incomplete, leaving many conservative holdovers who are still voting members today. By late 1987 Gorbachev still had few of his own people in the Politburo. Most are "Andropovians," in Tatu's terms, who owe little to Gorbachev and are only his very conditional allies.

Hough's interpretation could not be more different. In March 1985, he believes, Gorbachev was stronger than any previous general secretary at a comparable point. The new Politburo members appointed in the following two years owed their previous rise to Gorbachev's early influence over cadres appointments, especially Ligachev, who in 1983-84 had served under Gorbachev's supervision. It was Gorbachev who brought them into the Politburo, quickly surrounding himself with his own men. They were officials he had known in the southern provinces, the Communist Youth League (in which Gorbachev himself made his start), or Moscow State University (from the days when he was a student there). Thus Gorbachev's support in the Politburo was strong from the start. As for turnover in the Central Committee, it was judicious timing—not lack of power—that stayed Gorbachev from making an even cleaner sweep than he did. Hough predicted (as did most Sovietologists) that at the upcoming Party Conference Gorbachev would finish the job.

Tatu was the first Western observer to point (as early as the fall of 1985) to Ligachev as a potential source of conservative resistance to Gorbachev, and in all his writing since he has dwelt on Ligachev's role as an obstacle to the general secretary. Ligachev is, in Tatu's view, the classic "Andropovian." Personally incorruptible and ascetic, he shares Gorbachev's determination to restore discipline and to modernize the economy; but he does not concur in the more radical or visionary elements of Gorbachev's program. On those, he barely goes through the motions. Tatu quotes a French politician who spoke with Ligachev last year: "When Ligachev talks about *glasnost* and democratization, he resembles Louis Jouvet playing love scenes."

For Hough, on the other hand, Ligachev is Gorbachev's "bad cop," and his power is no more than the power of a chief of staff. Ligachev chairs weekly meetings of the Secretariat, which is essentially only an administrative function. He and Gorbachev agree on the issues more than they disagree, and Ligachev's conservatism, though real enough, is actually useful to Gorbachev because it reinforces his image as a liberal under siege. Thus, whereas Tatu



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devotes several pages to Gorbachev's efforts to contain Ligachev by parcelling out his functions to more loyal associates (not altogether successfully, Tatu argues), Hough sees the same movements as basically a routine division of labor.

Tatu and Hough have, then, a different interpretation for every phase of Gorbachev's career, his power, and his strategy. And they work, what's more, from the same facts, and use much the same methods of analysis. In particular, both pay great attention, as all Sovietologists do, to the "cadres weapon," that is, to the control of personnel, as the key instrument for power in Soviet politics. Both books hold a wealth of information about patronage ties, personal relations, career lines, and the ways these are used by Soviet politicians to build and to guard power. Russia-watchers have always been compulsive file-keepers, and these are two of the best. Tatu has built an awesome computer database called "SOVT," which contains the biographies of tens of thousands of Soviet officials since the beginning of the Soviet period, while Hough relies on a sprawling collection of note cards built up over 30 years of wide reading, combined with the most formidable memory in the business. (Computerphobes will be glad to know that, in this latter-day contest between John Henry and the steam hammer, the two come out about even.)

BUT BACK TO our puzzle. How, then, such different books? The answer is that Tatu and Hough represent two distinct lines of descent, two different traditions, in Western Sovietology. While still a correspondent in Moscow in the early '60s, Tatu was much influenced by Robert Conquest's classic work of Kremlinology, *Power and Policy in the USSR*, which was based on the style of exegetical analysis developed by Russian émigrés in the '30s and '40s, but which ultimately derived from the tradition of "the historiography of princes" that goes back to Saint-Simon, Machiavelli, and Tacitus. Analyzing the post-Stalin transition, Conquest saw the single totalitarian dictator gradually being replaced by a conservative oligarchy perpetually locked in internal conflict. The general secretary emerges out of this group, but is forever in contention with it. The system is still totalitarian, but it is a totalitarianism based on a ruling bureaucratic class. These have also been the central themes of Tatu's work.

Hough's work grows out of his early training under the "totalitarian school" of scholars at Harvard and MIT in the '50s and '60s. From Merle Fainsod and the young Zbigniew Brzezinski, he retains the stress on the strong general secretary and the weak institutional restraints on him; from Barrington Moore and Walter Rostow, the concept of "development totalitarianism," a system that uses its power to mobilize and to modernize, but can itself undergo modernization in the process. Hough became known over the last two decades for his vigorous case that there were strong pluralist tendencies in the Soviet system.

Hough's recent stress on the power of the general secretary has startled his colleagues, but it is consistent with his background and his past work. For Hough, the key to a general secretary's strength remains "the circular flow of power," that is, the leader's ability to use his control over the cadres office to build up a loyal clientele at the lower levels of the Party apparatus. He then cashes in this support to gain control of the higher bodies, the Central Committee and the Politburo itself. This implies, in turn, that for Hough the support of lower bodies matters very much. The Politburo is not all-powerful; it guards its power, indeed, by paying close attention to the views of the Central Committee and the Party apparatus. But in picking the membership of those bodies, the institutionalized power of the general secretary, always strong, has grown even stronger in recent decades.

For Tatu, by contrast, the post-Stalin Politburo is mostly a closed club of oligarchs who rule largely independently of the Party apparatus or the Central Committee. If Hough's Politburo is a little like the House Appropriations Committee, Tatu's Politburo is the Mafia. In times of succession it consults the "feudal clans" that are the KGB, the military, and the Party apparatus. For the most part, however, the Politburo jealously guards its power and its jurisdiction, particularly against the ambitions of general secretaries. To be sure, the general secretary has unique assets in dealing with the Politburo, but the oligarchs are well aware of the crucial importance of the cadres weapon, and they fight to retain control of it.

The really fundamental difference between Hough and Tatu, however, concerns the attitude of the Party elite, and the nature of the resistance to Gorbachev's reforms. For Tatu, the passing of the revolutionary era has left a pro-


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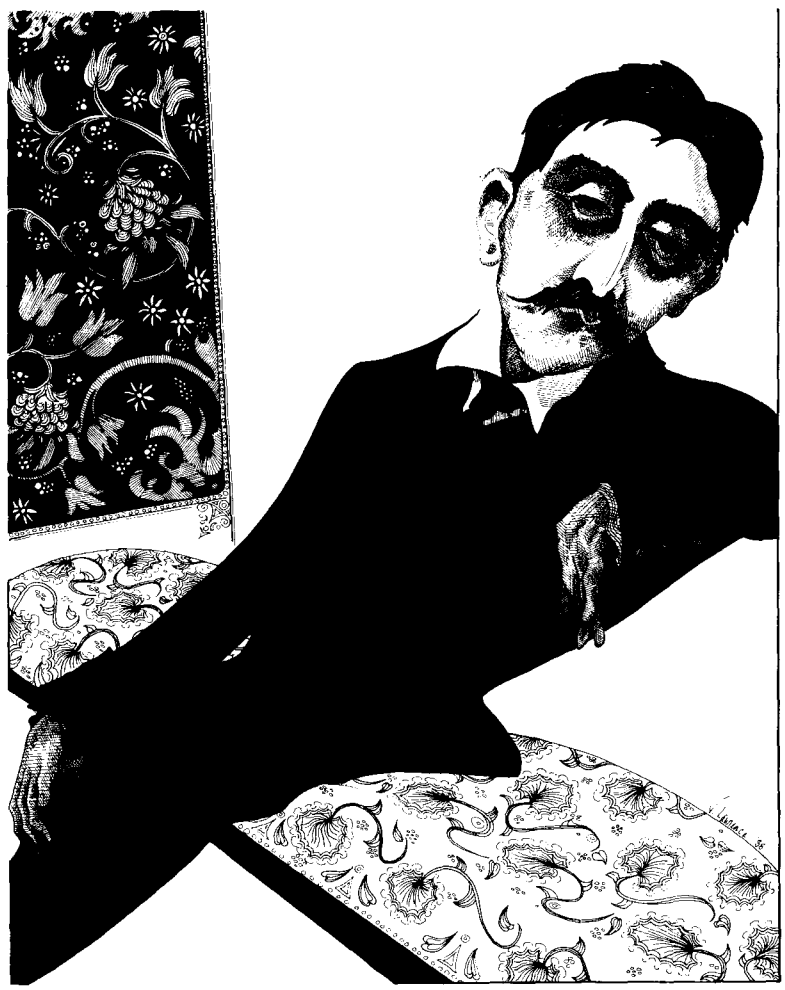
foundly conservative society, based on privilege, security, and the past. The charismatic leadership of Lenin's and Stalin's day has decayed into clientelism. Both the bureaucracy and the people have a great deal to lose from reform, and they see little to gain.

Hough, while not denying the elements of traditionalism in the Soviet system, argues that the violent anti-Western upheaval of the last two generations (Russia's counterpart to the Khomeini revolution, as he puts it) has left a new Soviet elite that is educated and self-confident, wise to its own past and its own weaknesses, and determined to learn from the West—including the bureaucrats. "Over time," Hough concludes, "the bureaucrats are Gorbachev's strongest supporters." In short, Hough believes that the Soviet system, when confronted with pressure for change from the outside world, can respond to it. Tatu rather doubts that it can: caught between irresistible outside pressure and an immovable internal structure, the Soviet leadership cannot avoid a crisis.

# IN SEARCH OF LOST PROUST

*In preparing a new translation of Proust's novel* In Search of Lost Time, *I have come upon the original opening of* Swann in Love*—given in the notes of George Milly's new edition—which the author sacrificed while correcting his first proofs. It is a virtuoso fragment of some interest, both for the introduction of the Venetian theme, so elaborated in subsequent volumes, and for the first characterization of our friends, the Verdurins. The passage was published only last year in France, and has never been translated. It was completed in 1911 and definitively discarded by Proust in 1913.*
***—Richard Howard***



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You might say that Monsieur and Madame Verdurin were like certain squares in Venice, spacious and unexpected, accidentally glimpsed in the course of an evening stroll and not cited by any guidebook. The traveler has ventured into a network of narrow channels which chaotically fissure the fragment of Venice lying before him, squeezed between canals and the lagoon, when all of a sudden, at the end of one of these *calli*, as if the very substance of Venice, in crystallizing, had undergone an unforeseen distension, he finds himself in a *campo* so vast there seems to be no room for so much space, lined by fine mansions on whose pale pale facades is fixed the moonlight's meditation. This architectural group, toward which, in any other city, main thoroughfares would have led straightway, is here concealed by the merest alleyways—like one of those palaces in Oriental tales to which, for a single night, down a path he can never again discover by day, is led a character who eventually comes to believe he has been there only in his dreams . . .

An ordinary reader of the society pages encounters there, and grows familiar with, the names of any number of persons whom he will never know and who are frequently distinguished by only middling wealth, even by dubious titles or talents; and never has he read the name Verdurin in such places. But one day, attempting to rent a house at the beach, he comes upon several villas larger than the rest and makes inquiries: they have been rented to Mme Verdurin, for herself and her friends. At Versailles, the Grand Hotel is full and only the finest suite, furnished with antiques, seems to be unoccupied—but it is not available, it is engaged all year round by Mme Verdurin. Because of Mme Verdurin, who has reserved them for herself and her friends, you cannot have the best box at a gala concert or the right table at that new restaurant outside Paris. And on those atlases of Parisian society which gossip-columnists compile in such minute detail and on such a large scale that an income of a hundred thousand francs often suffices to put its possessor on the map, you discover that the necessarily vast territory occupied by the Verdurins, who spend seven or eight hundred thousand francs a year, is nowhere mentioned or accounted for.



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It is interesting to note that both Hough and Tatu disparage the political usefulness to Gorbachev of the liberal intelligentsia. For Tatu, since the intelligentsia has no power, Gorbachev's use of *glasnost* to appeal to them against the bureaucracy is a sign of weakness and bad strategy. Hough takes a more startling view: intellectuals are inherently critical in any country, he observes. They will never be satisfied with anything less than constitutional democracy. In the long run, therefore, they will be a serious source of opposition to Gorbachev.

How would Hough and Tatu appraise Gorbachev's position in the wake of the Party Conference? Hough would most likely declare Gorbachev the winner, because the event demonstrated the general secretary's control over the agenda and the willingness of the Party apparatus to continue down the path of reform; and the extraordinary openness of the event also invigorated political life throughout the system. Tatu would stress the strength of the conservatives, their rage over the "excesses" of *glasnost*, the prominent role of Ligachev, Gorbachev's failure to purge his opponents, and the compromises he had to make.

WHO IS RIGHT? Since part of the debate is about the manner of Gorbachev's rise, it is interesting to note that Ligachev himself shed some new light at the Party Conference, when he told the delegates that in March 1985 Gorbachev's election could have gone the other way, and that Gromyko did indeed play a crucial role in supporting Gorbachev. Equally crucial, Ligachev said, was Viktor Chebrikov, the KGB chairman, who was still technically a non-voting member of the Politburo at the time. But Ligachev's most interesting revelation was that "a large number of Party province chiefs" also helped to swing the decision, thus suggesting that outside players in the Central Committee do indeed have the power to determine the outcome. Score half a point for Tatu, half a point for Hough.

Ligachev, as close to the horse's mouth as one can get (if one believes horses), also told the delegates that Gorbachev was distinguished even in Brezhnev's day as a man willing to speak out against political corruption and the other "zones beyond criticism" of the Brezhnev era, at a time when "at any moment you could find yourself—at best—ambassador to a distant country." One point for Hough. On the other hand, Ligachev's comments on his role in the defeat of Boris Yeltsin,


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# Israel's Borders
## Are they "legitimate"? Should they be changed?

Many in the Arab world insist that the State of Israel is "illegitimate" and that, in order to be considered for "recognition", it must, at the very least, "adjust" its borders. In order to justify that insistent demand, Arab propaganda has created many myths. By dint of constant repetition, some of these myths have come to be accepted as reality.

### What are some of these myths, and what are the facts?

**Myth:** The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 changed border arrangements that had existed for centuries.
**Fact:** The borders in the Middle East were drawn arbitrarily after World War I, by Britain and France. In the spoils, Britain got Iraq and Palestine. In 1922, contrary to its mandate from the League of Nations, Britain gave the area east of the Jordan River (77% of Palestine) to the Hashemite tribes.

**Myth:** Israel has been expansionist since its establishment.
**Fact:** In 1974, Israel returned to Syria territories captured in the 1967 and 1973 defensive wars. In exchange for a peace treaty, Israel returned the vast Sinai area to Egypt, with all of its settlements, strategic installations, and economic assets. Thus, Israel proved conclusively that peace and security—not extra land—are its top priorities.

**Myth:** Judea and Samaria (also called "the West Bank") are part of Jordan.
**Fact:** The British allocated the area east of the Jordan river to the Hashemite tribes. These tribes founded a kingdom and called it Transjordan. In 1948, after the declaration of Israel's independence, the British-led Transjordanians attacked the newly-founded Jewish state and were able to occupy Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem. They renamed themselves "Jordan" and stayed in that occupation for 19 years, until they were defeated and driven out by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War.

**Myth:** Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria ("West Bank") are illegal, an obstacle to peace.
**Fact:** Contrary to what Arab propaganda suggests, Jordan was never sovereign in Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank"). Thus, the constantly-repeated accusation of "Israeli occupation" is pointless. Numerous international legal authorities, among them Eugene Rostow, have shown conclusively that Israel's rights in Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank") are based on international law and are further affirmed by U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. President Reagan concluded that Jewish settlements are not illegal and that ". . . all people—Moslems, Jews, and Christians—are entitled to live in the West Bank."

**Myth:** Israel annexed the Golan Heights illegally and has no right to hold onto them.
**Fact:** The Golan Heights is a desolate area the size of Queens, NY. The arbitrary boundary lines drawn after World War II did place the Golan Heights in Syria. It put Israel at an impossible military disadvantage. From 1948 until Israel captured the Heights in the 1967 Six-Day War, Syria subjected Israeli settlements in the plains below to constant bombardment. Israel has been prepared to negotiate all issues with Syria, including the status of the Golan Heights.

**Myth:** Israel's insistence on defensible borders is unrealistic in this age of missiles and long-range bombers.
**Fact:** Israel, *including* Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") has an area about half the size of San Bernardino County in California. In contrast, the land area of the Arab nations is twice that of the U.S.! If Israel were to give up Judea and Samaria, it would only be nine miles (!) wide between the Arab military machine and the Mediterranean Sea. That narrow waist contains 75% of Israel's population and most of its industrial installations. Missile and bombers would not be needed. In case of attack, Israel could not mobilize and its principal population centers would be reduced to rubble within a matter of minutes.

Israel is the only victorious country in recorded history that, in quest for peace and acceptance, has surrendered vast territories to the vanquished. Still, Israel is not prepared to commit suicide by yielding to propaganda and myth and by adjusting its boundaries to suit the purposes of its implacable enemies. The insistence on "adjustment" of borders is one step in the plan for its destruction. The solution? Sit down at the negotiating table and work out an agreement on borders, just as Israel did with Egypt. Israel has been ready for such talks for 20 years. So far, only Egypt has finally agreed to sit down and talk to Israel. All other countries concerned consider themselves in a state of war with Israel, deny its "existence", and will not consider any talks or negotiations.

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the disgraced former Party boss of Moscow, suggest that from beginning to end Ligachev had a direct and powerful hand in high-level cadres appointments. One point (it seems) for Tatu.

ONE COULD continue keeping score in this way, but that would miss what is really at issue. Finally the difference is philosophical. Tatu's interpretation, in the end, is based on a cynical view of unchanging human nature. Tatu would argue, for example, that the Party apparatus can view the upcoming political reforms with relative equanimity, because it knows that similar reforms have been implemented in Eastern Europe without injury to the ruling parties' monopoly of power. Hough's interpretation is the more unorthodox one, because it offers the possibility of real change. It makes greater allowance for the complexity of human motives, the inconstancy of human affairs, and the dynamic elements in Leninist political culture. Over the long run, as even Tatu admits, every system changes. The strength of Hough's book is that he is more alert to the long-term possibilities of change than Tatu.

But who is right about Gorbachev's strength and strategy *now*? Here I am inclined to accept more of Tatu's view than Hough's. In particular, I find it difficult to believe that the Soviet system's restraints on the general secretary are as weak as Hough believes. The evidence of the conservatives' strength over the last year is too great to discount, and Ligachev does not seem quite as tame as Hough portrays him. Of course, one must concede to Hough that such objections only make Gorbachev's performance as a politician all the more remarkable. Faced with resistance to his plans for the Party Conference, Gorbachev maneuvered, temporized, and compromised, and still managed to bring off an impressive political victory.

Thanks to the momentum from the Party Conference, events in the last two months have been going largely Gorbachev's way. The Party Central Committee has met and endorsed Gorbachev's package of political reforms. A fresh round of elections at all levels of the Party is scheduled to begin in September, this time under the new rules. Gorbachev may get his personnel replacements after all, even if not yet in the Central Committee. Meanwhile, both before and after the Party Conference, four of the last Brezhnevite province bosses, in whose fiefs the most outrageous vote-rigging took place, have been quietly retired, and they have been replaced with men whose careers suggest ties to Gorbachev and his current cadres chief Georgii Razumovskii. There is no sign (so far) that liberal editors will be dismissed or that they are about to be silenced. Gorbachev's only concession (so far) to the conservatives has been a reminder to the media that they must be "responsible" and "moderate."

Still, as Hough reminds us, the key question is not how much power? but, power for what? The Party Conference delegates' real message to Gorbachev was that unless his economic reforms succeed in shortening lines and stocking stores, unless he can control political ferment and maintain consensus, his political momentum will dissipate quickly. Gorbachev's strategy of combining political and economic change may be self-defeatingly radical. There is a real danger that the political reforms will produce so much distraction and uncertainty that they will defeat the economic reforms. In post-Stalinist Russia, as Khrushchev discovered 24 years ago this fall, "let them eat politics" is a losing slogan.

THANE GUSTAFSON

Thane Gustafson, associate professor of government at Georgetown University, is a specialist on Soviet domestic politics.

# CHURCH AND DRECK

## Wheat That Springeth Green
## by J. F. Powers

(Knopf, 335 pp., $18.95)

Forty years ago, when a writer named Peter Taylor published his first book, a collection of stories, it was reviewed in *Commonweal* by a writer named J. F. Powers, whose own first book of stories had been published the previous year. Powers liked the way Taylor refused to tell tales as they had been told before:

> He refuses, moreover, to exploit his material to the limit, to manufacture characters, drama, suspense—in short, he won't traffic in what is known as a "strong story line." He refuses to be electric. He knows that life itself has a very weak story line.

The disdain expressed here is directed at writers who turn it on—who, unlike Taylor, manufacture and exploit "life" in the interests of a presumed artistic success that is, in fact, a failure of realism.

Yet in the two longest and most ambitious pieces from Powers's first collection, *Prince of Darkness* ("Lions, Harts, Leaping Does" and the title story), he himself had, if not "trafficked" in a strong story line, at least built narratives that ended strongly in revelations, in "epiphanies," as in the work of his master Joyce. At the close of "Lions, Harts . . ." the dying Father Didymus closes his eyes as the snowflakes whirl at the window of his sickroom and enter "darkly falling" into his failing consciousness. And in "Prince of Darkness," the fleshy, materialistic Father Burner, burning for a pastorate of his own, opens the archbishop's letter to find that he has been assigned to a new parish, but as an assistant to the priest in charge. It is fair to say that the best stories (some of them clerical, others not) in *Prince of Darkness*, and in *The Presence of Grace*, which followed it nine years later, operated through a practiced, well-shaped narrative voice whose command of its materials was authoritative—as opposed to life's "weak story line."

Powers's early stories were admired by readers who looked to discover in fiction the metaphoric, "poetic" qualities of lyric verse—qualities that were present in the work of writers like Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty. Like them, and like his young contemporary Flannery O'Connor, Powers had a genius for capturing some of the ways people talked; much of the pleasure in reading him had to do with the pure satisfactions of American speech accurately rendered. But Powers was also a Midwesterner whose first favorite writer was Sinclair Lewis, who loved Sherwood Anderson's "Triumph of the Egg," whose distinctive subject was the American Catholic clergy.

Powers would say, in an interview in 1964, that he wrote about priests "for reasons of irony, comedy, and philoso-



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phy," and that these were compelling reasons because priests "officially are committed to both worlds in the way most people officially are not." Its commitment to sacred as well as spiritual reality meant that the priesthood was a specially good place to observe what Powers called the "intramural dogfights between ascetics and time servers." The typical protagonist in a Powers story has made some sort of choice or compromise between the two worlds; and it is usually an unsatisfactory compromise, since—like the rest of us only more so—priests are the victim of their position.

Such a victim was the hero of Powers's award-winning first novel of 1962, *Morte D'Urban*. In that book, he became more expansive—after all, he was writing a novel—and brought an exploratory-creative manner to his study of the get-ahead priest. Throughout the novel Father Urban is both the object and the vehicle of Powers's satire, as he strives to improve the Clementine order and bring about useful accommodations between the Church and the world. But by the end of the book something has happened to make this time server care less about whether or not he represents a "first class outfit." He has become physically weaker but (Powers seems to suggest) spiritually stronger.

THE TONE OF *Morte D'Urban* was more relaxed than the earlier stories, even wayward. A reader couldn't always see exactly how one chapter followed from its predecessor. Weaken the story line, Powers seemed to be reminding himself, in order to see how much "life" can be let into a novel. In shorter works such as "Keystone" and "Farewell" (from his third collection, *Look How the Fish Live*, which appeared in 1975), a similarly reflective and leisurely spirit kept the narrative from becoming too streamlined. These stories gave the impression that when Powers began them, their endings were not already in sight, waiting on the horizon. (The surprising, wonderfully casual ending of "Farewell" provides a nice instance of concluding by not exactly concluding: we're told that the bishop, his car having been sideswiped by a truck, "was in the hospital for a while, doing fairly well for a man of his age, he understood, until he took a turn for the worse.")

Two stories from *Look How the Fish Live*, "Bill" and "Priestly Fellowship," now turn up rewritten and expanded. They are episodes in Powers's extremely funny and satisfying new novel, a long 26 years after *Morte D'Urban*. *Wheat That Springeth Green* takes its hero, Father Joe Hackett, from a youthful portrait of the priest as young rascal, through his experiences at seminary and as a curate celebrating his first mass, and into his life as the pastor of St. Francis and Clare in suburban Inglenook, out there someplace in Powers's Minnesota. As with his earlier novel, the structure is episodic, the episodes mainly organized to exploit serious matters for comic purposes.

These matters include Joe's sexual awakening (really the first time Powers has dealt with such material, and very successfully); his strivings as a seminary student to become more contemplative by discomforting the flesh with a hair shirt; his principled refusal as a rookie priest to participate in the taking up of a special collection at his first mass. Compared with most of his fellow seminarians, the young Joe Hackett is an "ascetic," unpopular and unbending in the stands he takes on spiritual matters. Powers treats him with an irony that is affectionate and offhand. In fact, the narrative style of the early episodes—and most sustainedly so in the 200 or so pages about Joe's life as a priest (the second and by far the longest of the book's three sections)—is a more racy, idiomatic, and intimate one than that of *Morte D'Urban*. Part of Powers's design, in the earlier novel, was to make us uncertain just how to respond to Father Urban's success as a publicist for the Clementine order and to his prideful irritation at being closeted with intellectual and social inferiors at the Clementine rural retreat. Is Urban a snob, unpriestlike in his pride? Or does he have a right to be furious? Powers never tells us, and his sentences maintained a cool distance from Urban, whose character was more observed than delighted in, more inspected than used as a vehicle through which his creator could perform.

Performance, however, is very much the stuff of *Wheat That Springeth Green*. Powers has said that in writing fiction he thought mainly about giving his readers an experience, that he was a performer, "a little monkey with a cup." The new novel makes its appeal through the variety and charm of its particular performances, to which strong story lines and thematic emphases take a back seat. In one of the best of such sequences we follow Joe on a pilgrimage to a mall where

## RED CARS

The driver's door of the '57 Ford coupe
caught in the snow and bent backwards
as he backed down the driveway on his way
to the middle of his junior year. December child,
he parallel-parked for the inspector
into a drift, while I watched him almost
pass the test. My father found the olive-green
and rusting hulk, covered the seats in barber pole-
striped vinyl, reamed the engine for my brother's
initiation into the mysteries
of transporting himself, and lacquered
the finish into a maraschino
chariot, like the fire chief's who unleashed
his siren as my brother laid rubber
at the light. Waiting for me to finish
my toast and cocoa, he bent the door back
in a snow bank. Tensed, like a loaded crossbow,
when I leaned into the window to ask if he
could wait a minute, he let the door
answer my question. Twenty-six
years later, I called to talk about
the business of old jalopies, catering
rock concerts, and selling occasional freight cars
of small appliances. The double carburetor
of his '66 Volvo 2 door coupe, he told me,
is like twin bladders: one squirts
all over the snow, while the other
closes up for winter. Come visit
and we'll make them tango. Maybe,
I answered, and went on to resurrect the time
he drove my go-kart into a wall. It's funny
now, I said, but that steering wheel
jammed between your legs drove the sunburn
right out of your face. Between goodbyes
and waiting in silence for the other
to click off, a battle we sometimes fought
for the fun of it after a conversation
went down reasonably smooth, I whispered
don't sell the Volvo.

ROGER WEINGARTEN



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he plans to return an empty beer case and dispose of his non-returnable empties of the hard stuff (the pastor is a serious drinker). Setting out in his car he nearly collides with a pesky journalist named Brad who, annoyingly, says "*Ciao*" to Joe and addresses him as "padre." After this:

> Approaching Inglenook's period shopping mall—cobblestones, gas lights, board signs—Family Grocer & Fruiterer, Apothecary, Ironmonger, and so on—Joe noticed that the weather ball, from which the mall took its name, Ball Mall, and for which a color code too often appeared in Hub's Column (Hub being Brad's nom de plume) in the Inglenook *Universe*—
>
> *When weather ball's red as fire,*
> *Temperature's going higher;*
> *When weather ball's white as snow,*
> *Down temperature will go;*
> *When weather ball's royal blue,*
> *Forecast says no change is due;*
> *When weather ball blinks in agitation,*
> *Watch out, folks, for precipitation*—
>
> was grey, not working.

If you're not paying full attention to this dense writing, you may miss how the almost-forgotten subject of the sentence ("weather ball") eventually completes itself. When attended to, indeed, when listened to—as we must listen to the voice of Powers's sentences—the effect is masterly.

JOE'S MOTTO throughout the book might be said to be, in one of his own formulations, that "the separation of Church and Dreck was a matter of life and death for the world." But Powers is a satirist who, like Flaubert and Joyce before him, feeds off Dreck as the stuff of comic life, and he has a remarkable eye and ear for the marvelous awfulness of American commercial invention. The pride of Ball Mall, for example, is a "discount house with a heart" called the Great Badger, which hires the aged and handicapped and stays open six nights a week until nine, thus outstripping the other Mall stores:

> The Great Badger itself, a forty-foot idol—its enlarged, exposed, red neon heart beating faintly in the sunlight that morning—sat up on its hunkers in the middle of the parking lot and waved a paw at cars going by. Joe did not, though he sometimes did if he had a passenger, wave back.

The portrait of the Badger is memorable enough, but it's that final sentence, so subtly awkward in its construction, that reveals the real force of Powers's art. In their calculated spin, his sentences are the equal of those concocted by satiric contemporaries like Kingsley Amis and Philip Roth.

Powers's dialogue is similarly complicated and energizing. Joe and a fellow priest named Lefty are about to go for a drink in the Little John Lounge (having just dined in the Robin Hood Room) when a woman, "apparently sober," asks them whether they are father and son. Joe, who is shorter and younger-looking, proceeds to the lounge, but Lefty stays to talk with her, and when he rejoins Joe has to confront some questions:

> "O.K. *Father*. What'd you tell that woman?"
>
> "What woman, *Father*?"
>
> "You know what woman. Tell her we're Protestants?"
>
> "Why should I tell her a thing like that?"
>
> "She didn't ask what we were?"
>
> "No."
>
> "O.K., *Father*. What if she *had* asked what we were?"
>
> Joe, silent, waited for Lefty to answer the question.
>
> "Hell, I don't know. Greek Orthodox maybe, or that I was a late vocation."

It is reminiscent of a good stage routine. Some of the best of such dialogue occurs between Joe and the new curate Bill (whose name Joe has to find out by a most circuitous route, in one of the book's funniest sequences). Much of the comedy in their scenes consists of what Joe refers to as "each . . . grinding his generation's ax." Joe grinds his when, on the curate's first morning at the rectory, Bill appears in jeans and a T-shirt and is told:

> ". . . I don't want to see you got up like that."
>
> "Around the house, I thought . . ."
>
> "No good, Father, No overalls."
>
> "Overalls? You mean jeans."
>
> Joe did, but wouldn't use the word, hating the phony-cozy sound of it. "Look, Father. You may not be able to brighten the corner where you are but why crumb it up? Why go out of the way to look bad? Everybody's doing it, sure, but you're not everybody, Father."

That contempt for the word "jeans" is, of course, Powers's; and it is typical of the tough fastidiousness he lets Joe exercise on the language-Dreck of others (the curate's musical tastes run to "Folk," which—another nice touch—Joe insists on calling "Folks"). There is plenty of animus here, but that has been part of Powers's strength as a writer from the beginning.

His comedy exists most pungently at the level of one-liners that punctuate and make vivid Joe's stream of thought: "People, he was thinking, have a right to be judged by their own standards until these can be raised . . ."; "Joe wasn't a fanatic about education. All he'd wanted was a school where the emphasis was on studies and sports (mens sana, you might say, in corpore sano), where those who failed were not passed, where the boys wore dark green blazers and the girls dark green jumpers ('Down with the daily style show!')"; "These were sobering thoughts to Joe. He got up and made another drink."

BY SINGLING out such scenes and sentences I may seem to neglect the novel's moral dimension. In *Morte d'Urban*, Urban's sense of himself and his vocation is altered over the narrative's course. In *Wheat That Springeth Green* (the title is from a medieval carol with the line "Love is come a-gain like wheat that spring-eth green"), an analogous change or discovery seems to occur in the short final section of the novel in which Joe gives up the bottle and makes a change in his pastoral career. But these pages are too elliptical to enact convincingly any spiritual transformation. We simply don't know enough about what the new man—if such he is—is like, or what, if anything, he has learned. Still, rather than thinking of the novel's ending as a failure, we should read it as testimony to how solid has been the affectionate irony with which the hero—a comic hero, surely—is treated in the previous 300 pages.

In fact, the different styles through which Joe is presented—sometimes realistically, in dialogue and relatively straightforward narration, at other times through more artificial and (as in *Ulysses*) distancing techniques—make for a character who eludes and renders irrelevant most of the moral terms by which we might judge him. By this I mean that Powers's fantasies, woven around and through the mind of his protagonist, are stronger and more memorable than our concerns about what will happen to him next, or finally.

An important source of such fantasies and musings is baseball, a game that means a good deal to Joe (as I suspect it does to his creator), and is an excellent vehicle for saying serious things humorously. The fantasy may be simply but deftly spun out, as when Joe pitches a dog's rubber ball ("the official American league ball") at his garage: " 'The Bosox could sure use Father.' '*Any* club could.'



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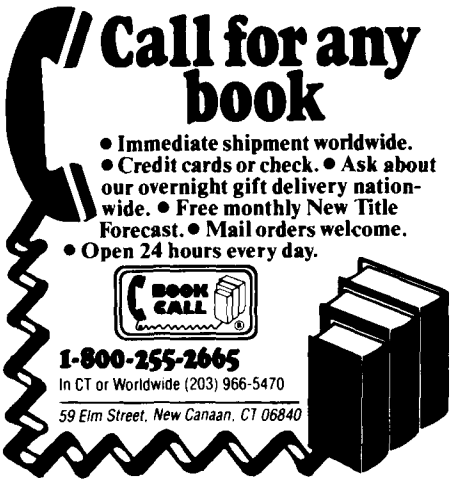
He alone, with his knowledge of batters (encyclopedic), his stuff (world of), his control (phenomenal), had made the Twins a constant threat down the years." Those parenthetical insertions make the sequence delightful. Or there is the following explicit comparison between the priesthood and the sport: "As was true of many players, some the best, the history and mystique of the Church evidently meant little to Lefty, as the history and mystique of the Church evidently did to many priests, some of the best." Anyone, we feel, who can think this way, in such an aptly cadenced pattern of wit, should keep on doing what he's doing and form his character. Powers provides his hero with so many splendid formulations that, verbally at least, he can't be improved on.

There is no need, in the case of a writer whose output over 40 years has been as small as J. F. Powers's, to rank his books in relation to one another. But his new novel seems to me the best book he has written. He would perhaps approve of Pope's couplet, "Let the strict Life of graver Mortals be / A long, exact, and serious Comedy." Joe Hackett puts the idea in a different idiom but comes up with something just as true: "Sure, birth was a big deal—after death, the biggest deal—but what was there to say about either of them, after a point?" *Wheat That Springeth Green* says a lot of what there is to be said about the life in between those big deals.

WILLIAM PRITCHARD

William Pritchard teaches English at Amherst and is completing a study of Randall Jarrell.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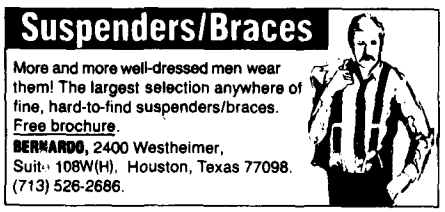
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# FREUDIAN TRIP

## Passion of Youth: An Autobiography, 1897-1922
## by Wilhelm Reich
## edited by Mary Boyd Higgins and Chester M. Raphael

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 178 pp., $17.95)

"Nuttier than a fruitcake" was the title of an article on Wilhelm Reich in 1943. Since his tragic persecution and death in 1957 and temporary eclipse, Reich has come back into the public eye; but about the nuttiness opinions remain divided. There are Reichian and neo-Reichian therapists, and many more who draw on his idea that trauma is expressed in tense muscles and disturbed breathing. But to orthodox psychoanalysts, I imagine, he is still a talented early Freudian who by the 1930s had gone right off the rails.

*Passion of Youth* covers Reich's first 25 years, but it is not conventionally an autobiography; it is best read together with Myron Sharaf's sympathetic 1983 biography. There are no notes, the briefest of prefaces, and it is not quite clear whether all the material was previously unpublished; Sharaf seems to have had access to some of it, though there is a Reich archive with a 50-year ban on publication. The first third of the book is Reich's brief account of his life up to 21, apparently written in his 20s; and the remaining two-thirds, diaries from 1918 to 1922, when he was studying medicine in Vienna.

The picture of the young Reich that emerges from the book is not a very prepossessing one (which is why one should turn to a fuller biography to right the balance). The section on childhood takes him to the age of 17, by which time he was orphaned of both parents in tragic circumstances. He was the elder of two sons in a landowning Jewish family in what is now Romania, non-orthodox and German-speaking. His earliest memory here is of dislocating his baby brother's arm in "play". He was to see himself during his life (not totally without foundation) as a dangerous and harmful person. His father was irascible and beat him for the slightest offense. His mother was often away taking medical treatment in spas. Most of the early incidents he recalls concern violence. Still, he looks back, he says, to a lost paradise.

The other memories he focuses on are of sexual experiences, which apparently started extraordinarily early for him. (Reich was writing retrospectively, of course, as a convinced Freudian.) At the


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age of four he was eavesdropping on the housemaid in bed with her lover, and not long after he was trying out an imitation with his acquiescent nurse and then his governess. He learned all he could from farm animals and the farmhands. By the age of 11, he claims, he was having daily intercourse with the cook. What a part domestic servants once played in sexual education! Material for a psychoanalytic thesis? It was, at any rate, a more humane teaching method than television and pornographic violence.

THE GREAT TRAGEDY of Reich's life, which was to affect it irrevocably, happened when he was 12. In his father's absence his mother had an affair with the boy's tutor, and he listened in to it with a mixture of horror and excitement. "Oh, the frightful memories that drag each recollection of my mother down into the dust, that soil my image of her with muck and filth. . . . With a head full of bizarre fantasies I crept back to bed, without hope of consolation, my youthful spirit broken!" When his father returned, he told him.

For nearly a year Reich's father beat his wife both physically and mentally until, after one failed suicide attempt, she succeeded in killing herself. Reich's description of his reaction to this is chilling: "I felt not a trace of grief"; and, bizarrely, "only a few days after Mother's death, we laid our offerings of whoredom in dance halls and honky-tonks: Father, my uncle, his son, and I, who was almost fourteen years old at the time." But it is clear that the guilt and the grief were always there. At 22, penniless and forced to sell his mother's linen, all embroidered by herself, he wrote in the diary, "Not mourning, no, but that certain cringing of the heart which spreads to the brain and prevents you from swallowing, a feeling which arises when least expected, that is my grief, my pain." To compound the tragedy, Reich's father died of tuberculosis a few years after his wife's death.

Reich was to spend his life studying sexuality and writing about it as the center of human experience. In his 20s, when he wrote this account, he saw his mother's act as dreadful. But there is a postscript added in 1944 in which he says that her behavior was perfectly right, and that his betrayal of her had been in revenge for her having let his father beat him. "May my life's work make good for my misdeed!"

It is no wonder that the Reich of the 1918-22 diaries was a young man tormented by frantic self-doubt and anger and confusion. He had clung to his father after his mother's death, but it meant, in effect, clinging to her murderer. Then there was the fact that throughout his teens he had compulsively frequented brothels. He describes how, at 15, he had woken up to look at the whore he was with and saw a young, frail human being asleep. He kissed her with tenderness and went back the next day; but she was "working." It is no wonder, either, that he should have been drawn to Freud. In the introduction to the diaries Reich does not explain how he heard of Freud, when he had his (very brief) analysis, how he came to be seeing patients in his early 20s, but such a sketchy training was not unusual in these early days of psychoanalysis. He had been demobilized after four futile years of war, and was the poorest of medical students; not only were postwar conditions very severe, but all his family wealth and land were gone.

IF ONE DID not know more of Reich and his later life, one might find these diaries repellent in their self-absorption. But photographs, for instance, suggest a kind of half-trusting warmth that is not so evident in the diaries. Reich was perhaps living out in his 20s an adolescence that he had been deprived of by family tragedy and war. There is little here about his involvement with socialism and psychoanalysis. The diary is chiefly concerned with a desperate longing to put an end to loneliness by finding the right woman. But "I need a woman who is both mother and whore." His family holocaust had prematurely set him the task of unifying the two, and in his life he was never to come to the end of it.

The two women who figure most prominently in the diaries are Lore Kahn and Annie Pink. He was to marry the latter. Both were his patients and then his lovers (in the odd conditions of psychoanalysis in those days, he may have been right in his comment that "a young man in his twenties should not treat female patients"). The story of Lore Kahn (he called his daughter after her) harks back rather dreadfully to his mother's. According to the diary, she moved from home to an unheated room to escape her parent's eye, ran a fever with "articular rheumatism," and died, "of sepsis," within a week. Her mother seems then simultaneously to have accused Reich of killing her daughter through an abortion (which he denied) and to have made sexual advances to him. Soon after, only by chance, he heard that she had gassed herself. It is hardly surprising that he wrote that he was "the murderer of an entire family":

> I am acting out a comedy, while causing the people around me to die! Didn't my own mother also die—better said, also commit suicide—because *I* had told all? I seek relief from this heavy burden; who will help me? Who am I and what can I do?

Reich also fell in love with Annie Pink during therapy, and also began an affair with her after its termination. Although he writes in the diary that he wants to marry her and would like to have a child by her, his concluding section is headed "My Early Forced Marriage." Annie's family found out about the affair and urged marriage, and Reich "gave in." Perhaps he feared yet another tragedy. The marriage, first of several stormy liaisons, lasted ten years, and there were two children.

"KEEP AWAY from me. I am overwhelming. I burn through people," Reich is reported to have said later in his life. In this diary he writes that "even the paper grins up at me, asking, 'Why are you soiling me?' " The course of his later life seems, in the extraordinary way of such life patterns, to have been both an attempt to prove that he was not bad, destructive, tainted with his father's rage, and a determination that he should in the end be punished for such badness.

His intuition was always sharp and his intentions generous. Early on he had spotted the besetting sin of psychoanalysis: intellectuality. More and more he stressed the bodily aspect of neurosis—with, of course, an emphasis on total orgasm as the criterion of health. ("What my Mother did was perfectly all right!" said the 1944 footnote.) And he was the only one of the psychoanalytic group generous enough to want to spread the insights of psychoanalysis to ordinary people. He set up free advisory clinics, and he saw socialist justice and sexual liberation as indivisible. But while the oppressed masses were perhaps running quite successful marriages and parenthoods, Reich's personal relationships caused chaos.

And then, as he began to believe he had isolated the source of life under the



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microscope, the strain of "nuttiness" began to creep in. It led him on into a wilderness of inflated theory that is reminiscent of the mad astronomer in Johnson's *Rasselas* who believed he controlled the weather. (Reich did, in fact, come to believe that sometimes.) Behind it all is a concept of life energy, which may one day prove to have "something in it": *chi*, "vibes," *pneuma*—the search for it is an ancient and worldwide one. But no one has validated Reich's experiments, and they obviously proliferated as his life became lonelier and emptier.

His experiences well illustrate the joke that paranoids also have enemies. He found himself rejected by both psychoanalysis and communism, expelled from Norway, where he tried to settle, and in America appallingly hounded to imprisonment and death. His American persecution began with an article in this journal, by one Mildred Edie Brady in 1947 ("The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich," TNR, May 26, 1947), which was sent to the Food and Drug Administration and led directly to his end. The FDA prosecuted him for perpetrating a fraud by treating people in the "orgone accumulator," which, Reich claimed, increased the life energy. His books and accumulators were ordered to be destroyed, and eventually in 1955 he was tried for contempt of this injunction. In 1957, aged 60, he was sent to jail for two years. Eight months later he was found dead in his cell.

He talks in this diary, but too briefly, of a strain of masochism in himself. Powerfully, this seems to have attracted rejection after rejection. In the psychotic document "My Unlawful Imprisonment" that he wrote while in custody, he comes back full circle to his sense of being a betrayer: "I have 'done wrong' to have disclosed to mankind the cosmic primordial mass-free energy which fills the universe." It is as though a passive, feminine, gentle Reich—his mother—was so suppressed and trapped in him that in the end he had to be killed by it. His last sentence in *Passion of Youth*, after describing the successes of his marriage and graduation, is, "Only my mother's good wishes would have made me happy."

ROSEMARY DINNAGE

Rosemary Dinnage is the author of *One to One: Experiences of Psycho Therapy*, to be published this fall by Viking.

**TRB**, *from page 4*

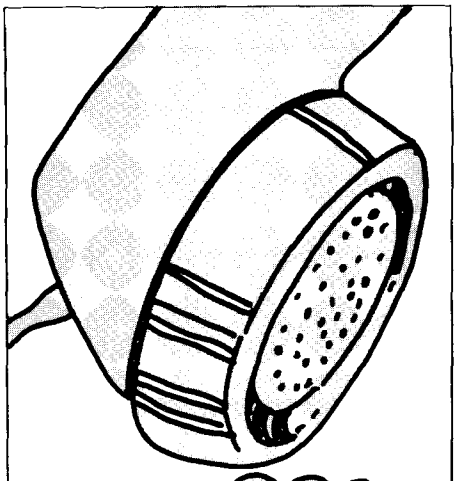
"the dialogue of the campaign down to the gutter") is itself a cynical and dishonest campaign ploy.

The other press convention that is helping Bush out is the almost total emphasis on campaign strategy. The usual metaphor for complaints of this sort is "horse race," but "chess match" might be more accurate. The press rewards successful moves, punishes unsuccessful ones, and doesn't dwell too much on whether the success is deserved or legitimate. Reporters note with admiration that Bush has adopted Reagan's technique of avoiding all unscripted appearances. And how many television reports on Dukakis and the furlough issue point out that California had a program almost as broad under Governor Reagan?

Bush has mastered what might be called the "small lie" technique. If the "big lie" is "a falsehood of such magnitude and audacity that it is bound to have an effect on public opinion even if it is not given credence by a majority" (*Safire's Political Dictionary*, see also "McCarthyism"), the "small lie" is an untruth so modest it almost passes unnoticed, but subtly shifts the terms of debate. Dukakis "fought tooth and nail to keep that outrageous furlough program," says Bush. Of course he didn't. He was barely aware of it. (It's Reagan who defended his state's system as "a great success" after a prisoner out on furlough murdered a cop.) But "fought tooth and nail" suggests this was something important to Dukakis, not a minor relic dug up from the clip files by the Bush campaign.

The small lie works in reverse, too. In polls, a majority of the public now says it doesn't mind Dan Quayle's decision to join the National Guard, even though a majority of that majority says it *would* mind if he had pulled strings to get in. But he *did* pull strings to get in. That's not in doubt. (The only mystery is whether he needed to; but he did, whether he needed to or not.) Yet by constantly reiterating that there is no evidence Dan Quayle pulled strings to get into the National Guard ("outrageous rumors and allegations"—Bush), the Republicans have managed to neutralize this issue.

It would be nice if lying, demagoguery, cheap shots, and low blows could be banished from the campaign. But they can't. If Dukakis wants to avoid indulging in them, he's got to make an issue of them instead.

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# WASHINGTON DIARIST

## *Late Boomer*

AS A BABY BOOMER, I've been experiencing some anguish about the 1960s ever since it came out that Dan Quayle served in the National Guard during the Vietnam War. I, too, kept clear of Vietnam, but that's not what troubles me. Like Quayle, I feel good about the choice I made at that time—in my case, to finish out junior high school and get braces off my teeth. We all had our priorities; mine was seeing puberty through to completion. It was an honorable decision, and I'm not going to apologize for it. What troubles me is the flood of '60s-generation reminiscences that Quayle has inspired in the media. Am I doomed to spend the rest of my life reading tortured confessions by draft dodgers? Those of us born in the late 1950s—incidentally, the peak years of the baby boom—are getting a bit weary of all this moral exhibitionism. Look, I agree that Dan Quayle should come clean about evading combat duty. But some members of the Woodstock generation seem poised to grant instant absolution in exchange for a good confession. (If Quayle has trouble getting the phrasing right, he won't lack for newspapers and magazines to crib from.) If failure either to serve in the war or to pay the price of resistance really was a serious moral lapse, let's treat it seriously. That's not to say Viet Guilt should drive Quayle out of public life, or even off the Bush ticket. But the Quayles and the Bill Bradleys and all the other politicians who fell short in those years to one degree or another—and as a hawk, Quayle fell shorter than most—should bear some liability for the duration of their political careers. This scarlet letter shouldn't be something you can talk your way out of. That would make it too much like the Vietnam draft itself.

QUAYLE IS far from the biggest lightweight in the Senate, but Bush deserves the criticism he got for passing over more formidable candidates like Bob Dole. I share the common suspicion that Bush was looking for someone he could tower over. What really gets me is that the strategy is working. Quayle's lack of Vietnam combat duty makes Bush's World War II heroics loom that much larger. And at Quayle's disastrous joint news conference with Bush in New Orleans, every time Bush stepped up to the microphone to rescue a tongue-tied Quayle he really did seem to grow in stature. Reporters now describe Bush as confident and eloquent on the stump. I have to draw the line here. When I tuned in C-SPAN the other day, Bush was endorsing the death penalty for "drugpins." Sounds like something you play with tiny bowling balls at the mall. ("Ma, can I have another quarter for drugpins?") Then he launched into his loony Pledge of Allegiance routine. Stature ain't what it used to be.

WHILE EVERYONE ELSE was either watching or picketing *The Last Temptation of Christ*, I went to see Costa-Gavras's new film, *Betrayed*, and found myself wondering where a picket line is when you really need one. Costa-Gavras has exposed political repression around the world in thrillers such as *Z* (Greece), *The Confession* (Czechoslovakia), *State of Siege* (Uruguay), and *Missing* (Chile). Ideological balance required that sooner or later he apply his formula to the United States. But how do you plausibly portray the U.S. as a police state? Back in the paranoid 1970s, films like *The Parallax View* and *Winter Kills* took a stab at it, but even then the conceit could only sell as high camp. Costa-Gavras and his screenwriter Joe Eszterhas tackle the problem by shifting their focus away from government to a right-wing hate group.

BETRAYED tells the story of a racist group in the Farm Belt that targets black and Jewish leaders for assassination through a vast underground network. In one sickening scene, the group stages a "hunt" in which the prey is not an animal but a black man scrambling half-naked through a forest. At the end of the film, a female FBI agent (Debra Winger) who has infiltrated the group—and, implausibly, fallen in love with its leader (Tom Berenger)—manages to expose the conspiracy. But her effort is futile: the larger, unseen network is everywhere, cultivating political candidates and infiltrating the FBI. As a filmmaker who strives to be taken seriously as a polemicist, Costa-Gavras has always taken certain liberties with the facts. Here he appears to have woven a political horror story virtually out of whole cloth. To be sure, harrowing isolated incidents of racial violence by hate groups have occurred in recent years. The film begins with the assassination of a radio personality who resembles Alan Berg, the Denver talk-radio host killed by white supremacists in 1984. Even the "hunt" may have a factual basis in a 1981 beating and hanging by Klansmen of a black teenager. (One of the Klansmen subsequently bragged, "We were out on a hunt.") Still, it's an enormous leap to portray such horrors as a routine fact of contemporary life, let alone as part of a massive fascist conspiracy. A recent *Washington Post* story about the film reported that hate-group members being monitored by the FBI actually number fewer than a thousand.

COSTA-GAVRAS'S cartoon vision of America is offensive for two reasons. First, it portrays rural white Americans as uniformly pathological bigots, a notion that itself reeks of bigotry. The film struggles for "complexity" by showing how gentle they are with each other, especially with their children. There's even a compassionate (and politically correct) explanation for what turned them psycho: they lost their family farms. But all this fake empathy ultimately serves to drive home the horror of what these white trash believe. Even the town preacher rains race hatred from his pulpit. (Costa-Gavras told the *Post* that "religions generally are racist, because they accept just one truthfulness and reject the other ones.") *Betrayed* also manages to insult blacks and Jews. Racism is a real force in our society. But it gets trivialized when it is portrayed as a bunch of nuts waving machine guns rather than in its more familiar forms—realtors who steer black families away from certain suburban neighborhoods, juries who assign the death penalty on the basis of whether the victim was black or white. (Anti-Semitism is real, too: I submit in evidence a creepy letter making reference to my "Ashkenazi" appearance that I received after I was recently on TV.) Costa-Gavras's guerrilla fantasy belittles such quotidian reality by suggesting, albeit inadvertently, that nobody has the right to complain unless they're being chased up a tree with a MAC 10.

TIMOTHY NOAH

Timothy Noah is a Washington correspondent for *Newsweek*.



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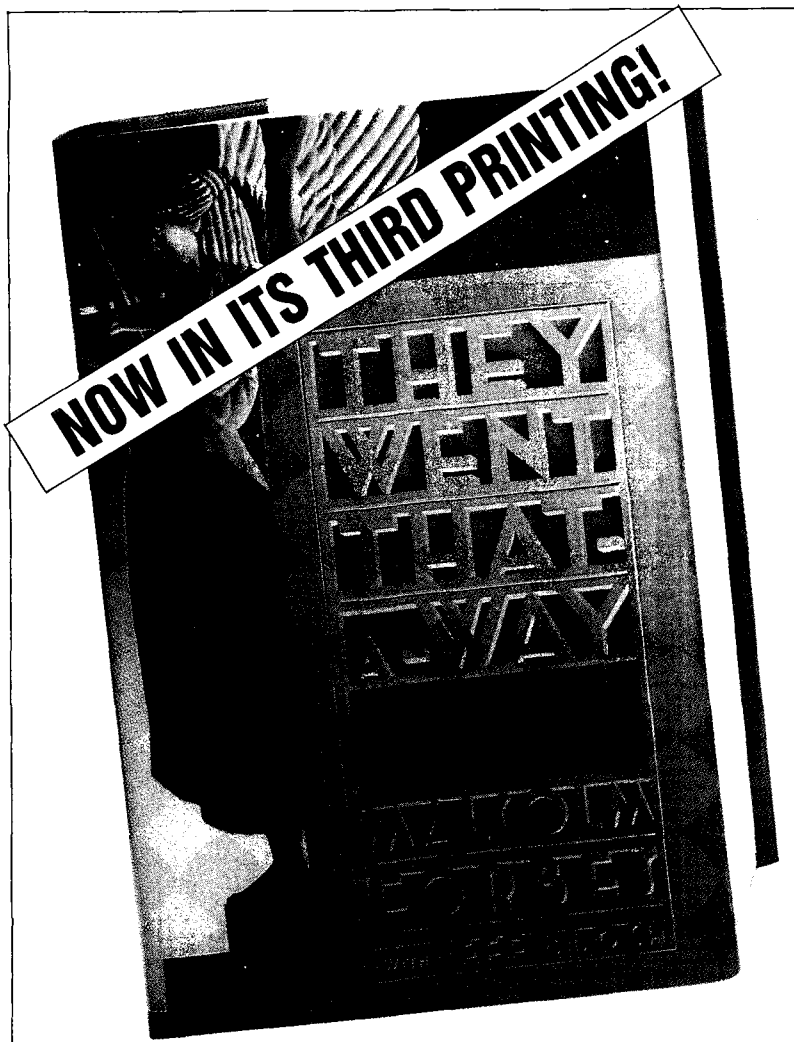


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John Jacob Astor IV
Attila the Hun
Sir Francis Bacon
P.T. Barnum
Busby Berkeley
Blackbeard the Pirate
Alfred S. Bloomingdale
Margaret Bourke-White
Diamond Jim Brady
Lenny Bruce
Lord Byron
Caligula
Al Capone
Catherine the Great
Claudius
Cleopatra
Montgomery Clift
Christopher Columbus
Adelle Davis
James Dean
John Dillinger
The Duke of Windsor
Isadora Duncan
Amelia Earhart
King Edward II
King Edward V
"Mama" Cass Elliot
William Faulkner
Archduke Franz Ferdinand
W.C. Fields
F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda
Jim Fixx
Henry Morrison Flagler
Benjamin Franklin
Sigmund Freud
Clark Gable
Judy Garland
King George V
George Gershwin
Euell Gibbons
Hermann Goering
Ulysses S. Grant
D.W. Griffith
Dag Hammarskjöld
Mata Hari
Jean Harlow
Ernest Hemingway
Jimi Hendrix
Wild Bill Hickok
Jimmy Hoffa
Billie Holiday
Buddy Holly
Ivan the Terrible
Jesse Woodson James
Thomas Jefferson and John Adams
Casey Jones
Janis Joplin
Princess Grace (Kelly) of Monaco
Bruce Lee
Vivien Leigh
Carole Lombard
Huey Long
Jayne Mansfield
Senator Joseph McCarthy
Glenn Miller
Sal Mineo
Margaret Mitchell
Marilyn Monroe
Jim Morrison
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Audie Murphy
Ramon Novarro
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Charlie Parker
Lieutenant General George S. Patton
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Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller
Will Rogers
Mark Rothko
Babe Ruth
Bugsy Siegel
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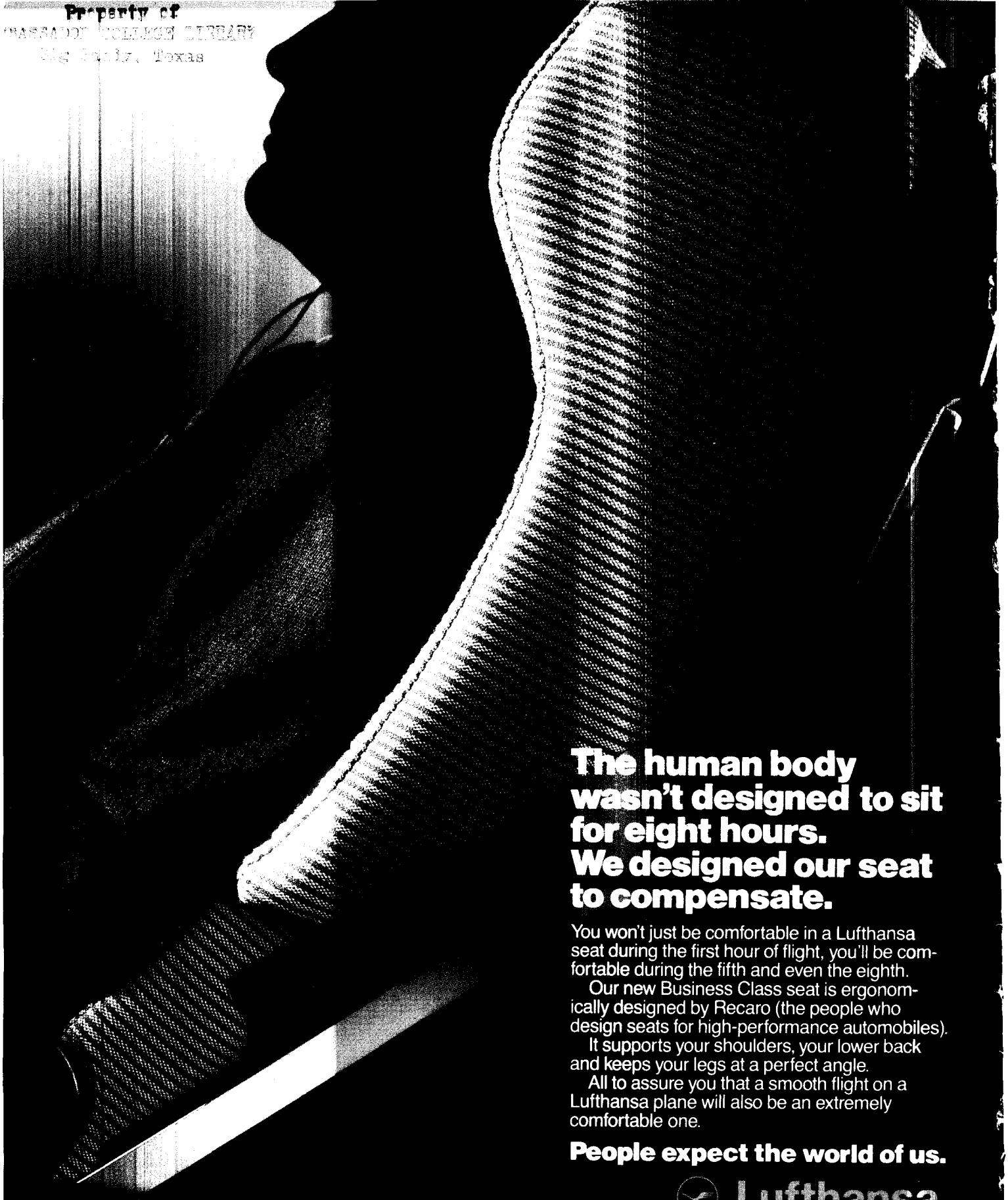

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